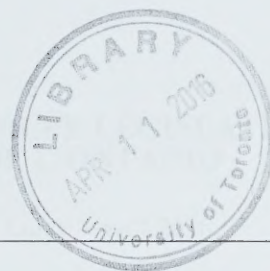


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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 4 April 2016

Lundi 4 avril 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 April 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 avril 2016

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming—it's a great honour to actually welcome them—two artists known as the Singh Twins, who are here from the UK. They're world-renowned artists. I'd first like to introduce them and ask them to stand: Dr. Amrit Kumari Dhigpal Kaur Singh, MBE, and Dr. Rabindra Kumari Dhigpal Kaur Singh, MBE, are joining us today.

I also ask you to join me in welcoming their relative Balvinder Kaur Singh, who is also here; I ask you to stand as well. My brother, Gurratan Singh, is here as well.

In addition, we also have page captain Amelia Naidoo's family, who is here today. I ask you also to join me in welcoming her mother, Leila Puran Naidoo; father, Mervin Naidoo; sister, Megan Naidoo; grandmother Sarah Naidoo; grandfather Sunny Naidoo; and aunt Patsy Puran. They're all here in the members' gallery. I ask you all to stand and ask everyone to join me in welcoming them as well.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to introduce the president of the Windsor district chamber of commerce. Matt Marchand is in the building today and has asked us all to join with the chamber at a reception later on this afternoon.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Our page captain today is Harry Blackwell. He's joined today by his mom, Sally Blackwell; his dad, Geoff Blackwell; and his grandmother Pam Kay. They're in the public gallery this morning. Please give them a warm Queen's Park welcome.

Mr. Todd Smith: They haven't arrived yet, Mr. Speaker, but I'd like to welcome the mayor of Prince Edward county, Robert Quaiff, and one of his councillors from South Marysburgh ward—also in Prince Edward county—Steve Ferguson, to the Legislature for question period this morning.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I also have some guests here from PAMA, which is one of the jewels of Brampton. It's a museum and art gallery and archive. We have Erin Fernandes and Stephen Weir, who are also here in the gallery. Please join me in welcoming them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Does the Premier believe that it's appropriate for ministers to fundraise from stakeholders with active files from within their respective ministries: yes or no? Is that conduct appropriate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do appreciate the member opposite's new-found interest in this issue. I think we can all agree that there's a need to raise money in order to campaign and to fund the democratic process. I've been clear about that publicly, Mr. Speaker.

Our government plans on introducing legislation—I have said in the fall, but we're going to introduce that legislation in the spring. I believe we can agree that this is an important issue and there needs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, I had announced last June that we were committed to making further changes. We will introduce legislation this spring. I have responded to the letters of the opposition leaders. I have asked them to come and meet with me, to join with me to give some input into that legislation, and I look forward to that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: I'm not asking about future conversations the Premier may have around election financing reform and whether she's actually interested or not, whether it's sincere or not. What I'm asking about is the conduct of her ministers.

My question is this: As leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, did the Premier allow these fundraising targets, and does she still believe they are appropriate? Is it appropriate for members of the Premier's cabinet to have fundraising targets?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member—thank you. Stop the clock. The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, come to order.

Please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There has been a set of rules in place that every party in this Legislature has followed. We have followed—

Mr. John Yakabuski: But you're the government. You are the one who can actually change the rules—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order. I've now decided I'm going to go after those individuals who have decided they're just going to chirp because they feel like it. Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, Mr. Speaker, I have invited both party leaders to join me for a meeting within the next few days to discuss important issues and to give input into legislation that we'll bring forward this spring. I want to give leaders time to consult with their respective parties so that their feedback and input can be reflected in the legislation that we introduce. That legislation will be debated—

Mr. Todd Smith: Six thousand dollars a chair.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, second time. I'll move to warnings now.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That legislation will be debated publicly. It will go through the committee process and there will be opportunities for the opposition and the public to participate. I would ask the members opposite to share their ideas with Ontarians and with the Legislature. We're committed to, especially, the intention to transition to a ban on corporate and union donations—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Does the Premier acknowledge that setting fundraising targets for cabinet ministers forces them to fundraise from stakeholders with active files within their respective ministries? It is impossible to avoid that ethical contradiction. Will the Premier do something about this?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I go back to my initial comment, which is that I think everyone in this Legislature agrees that there is a need to raise money in order to run campaigns. I don't think anyone would believe that only the wealthy should be able to run for office. There has to be a contribution and participation by other people and other organizations in fundraising.

There has been a set of rules in place. We have determined, and some time ago, that there need to be changes. We have started to make changes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is warned. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, Mr. Speaker, we've already undertaken initiatives to make elections more accountable and transparent. In 2007, we introduced third-party advertising rules for the first time and

introduced real-time disclosure for political donations which, as the member will know, other provinces are just catching up with.

We know there need to be further changes. I look forward to the input from the opposition.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, has a stakeholder with active files before any ministry been asked or made to feel obligated by the Premier, a minister, a member of her staff or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party to the raise funds for the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or a policy change? Yes or no?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Newmarket–Aurora is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The exchanges that I have with Ontarians all across the province, whether in a fundraising context or not, are about gleaning the best ideas that we can so that we can write policy in government that reflects the needs of the people of Ontario. That is the intention and that is the sole purpose for my exchanges, the exchanges of my members—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If you look at some of the major—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you do not understand my resolve, it's very clear: Stop heckling.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said publicly this past week, if you look at many of the major initiatives that we have undertaken in this House—whether it's increasing the minimum wage, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the investments in personal support workers, early childhood educators and developmental support workers—those are initiatives that have taken place because of feedback that we've heard from people around the province. It has absolutely nothing to do with anything other than—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: That was a lot of spin and talk for a yes or no question.

I will be more specific. On December 7, the Ministers of Finance and Energy took part in a fundraising dinner hosted by the people who ran the sale of Hydro One. Much of the Hydro One syndicate was in attendance—a syndicate that made over \$29 million from the sale of Hydro One. Further to that, the dinner raised a reported \$165,000 for the Liberal Party. That seems to me like a thank-you dinner.

Mr. Speaker, did the ministers pressure the companies to host—

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's innuendo. That is absolute innuendo.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, the other side appears sensitive in the face of facts.

Did the ministers pressure the companies to host and attend this dinner in exchange for being given the right to sell Hydro One—a bad deal, by the way, for the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said many times, the sole purpose of interacting with people in the province—and my experience of fundraising is that many of the people who give money to one party actually give money to all the parties. I assume that those conversations we have about policy are the same conversations that the opposition parties would want to have, so that they can be informed by the expertise of people who are in the field. I assume that that is the reality on the other side of the House. That is certainly the reality on this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Since I can't get an answer on the thank-you dinner from the Hydro One sale, let's talk about the overpayment for renewable energy, energy that could have been produced at a much lower rate if they did not hand out 20-year contracts to their Liberal friends at an additional cost of \$9.2 billion to the people of Ontario. Consequently, it seems that wind company after wind company donates to the Liberal Party coffers every year.

Did any of these companies that received wind contracts just happen to attend the \$6,000-a-plate dinner with the Minister of Energy on March 10—yes or no? Did the individuals who received contracts attend that dinner?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite can get lists of who donates to our party in real time, Mr. Speaker. Those lists are available.

I look forward to the policy initiative on this from the other side of the House that suggests that what we should do is bring back coal in this province and suggests that somehow renewable energy and a clean energy grid is not in the best interests of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not waiting for the last person to say something.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just say to the Leader of the Opposition that if that's not the plan and he doesn't approve of what we have done in terms of a clean electricity grid, I would suggest that he tell us that he's not going to bring back coal and that is not the agenda that he is going to put forward.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier.

Every voter in Ontario should have an equal voice, but Ontarians are concerned that their voice won't be heard by their government unless they write a big cheque. It's time to stop the undue influence that big money is having on politics in this province.

My question to the Premier: Does she agree?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the newfound interest on the part of the third party in this. We have, for some time, said that there needed to be changes. We have in fact brought forward changes and, as I said to the Leader of the Opposition, we intend to bring forward legislation this spring. I had said publicly that it was the fall, but we're going to move that up because I agree with the contention that people in the province need to have a good, long opportunity for input. If we bring forward legislation in the spring, there can be a good consultation with the public on that legislation.

In advance of that, I look forward to meeting with the leaders of the opposition so that they can bring forward their ideas as that legislation goes to completion of drafting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I did receive the Premier's response to my letter, agreeing to meet with me and the leader of the other opposition party. We're looking forward to that meeting, but it shouldn't be the case that opposition parties provide input and the Premier makes the decisions. That's why I'll be calling on the Premier to establish a process that's undertaken outside of this Legislature, headed by Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, because I don't think that these decisions should be in the hands of a single political party; they should be in the hands of Ontarians. So will this Premier agree to set up a process that engages all political parties and broader civil society in order to fix our broken system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand the need for the public to have an opportunity to comment on and to give us input, Mr. Speaker. That's why we have moved up our intention to introduce legislation from the fall to the spring. There will be a good opportunity for lots of input to the legislation in the committee process.

It's pretty clear to me that we need to move to ban corporate and union donations. That, to me, is not a question at this point; I think it's clear. If we look at what's happening in other jurisdictions, including at the federal level—that's something that we are going to do. So what I'm—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: What caused the epiphany? The Chief Electoral Officer has been calling for it for years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I'm interested in is hearing from the opposition leaders on what they think the transition should be to that. It took a number of years at the federal level to get to the point that they're at now. I'd like to know from the opposition leaders how that transition should work in Ontario.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't believe that changing the way political parties fund campaigns should be up to any single political party. Will this Premier agree that this process should be very broad, but should also include parties with significant support in the last election, whether or not they have representation in this Legislature?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the leader of the third party is asking whether Mike Schreiner from the Green Party should be allowed to take part in the process, absolutely. If we have a public process with legislation that can be amended, where we can get input on it, the public can take part in that process. That's how legislation works.

What I'm proposing is that the leaders of the opposition parties work with their folks, work with their parties, and bring forward to me in our meetings some proposals about what they'd like to see in the legislation. We draft the legislation, then that legislation becomes the grist for the public discussion and we can have a broad public discussion about where we should go.

But there are some givens. I think that it is quite clear that banning union and corporate donations is where we need to go, so I would look forward to their advice on how we would make a transition to that.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier.

People in Ontario should feel confident that politics in this province is not under the undue influence of big money—bottom line. And as I've said, changing how all political parties fundraise shouldn't be up to just one political party. If we are going to give people the confidence in the system that they deserve, then these decisions shouldn't just be up to politicians.

Does this Premier agree that the Chief Electoral Officer should take the lead role and include representatives of academia, civil society, business and labour?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It makes me wonder what the leader of the third party thinks happens at committee consultations. When I sat on committees as a regular part of my job as an MPP for three years, I heard the most intelligent, most thorough analysis of issues. Whether we talked about health care or electricity, we heard a very full range of delegations and input from people across the province. That's what I know happens at committee.

That's why I fully expect that as this legislation goes out, and once we've had input from the opposition parties, there will be a very, very complete discussion around the province from academics, from community leaders, from people who are part of unions and from people who are part of corporations, who want to have a role and want to have their say in that political discussion. I look forward to that. I welcome it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't think we need to tell the Premier what happens at committee. The Liberal majority shuts down the opinions of the opposition pretty much all the time.

On a serious note, getting big money out of Ontario's politics is a pretty obvious first step, but it can't be the only step. This should be about how we make our entire democracy more fair and not just about dealing with only the issues that are getting the highlight of attention right now.

Does the Premier agree that this needs to be a comprehensive and open process and not one that just benefits the Liberal Party?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that this process can only benefit the democratic system and can only benefit the people of Ontario. That is the purpose of the democratic process in this province. That is the purpose of government, which is not separate from the people of the province, but is part of the way our society works.

The leader of the third party may want to denigrate "big money," as she calls it. I don't know what she means by that. Is she talking about the money from teachers' federations? Or is she only talking about money from the private sector? Because the reality—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In some cases, some people, even when warned—maybe that's not enough.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is that we have all been operating under a single set of rules. Those rules are going to change, and I look forward to the input from the leaders of the opposition parties on what they think should be in that legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm going to end my questioning this morning with a pretty fundamental question to this Premier, because I think it's important that we understand whether or not she has an intention to make this process open and transparent.

Will the Premier commit to an open process that's headed by Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, with representatives from all political parties, academia, business, labour and civil society, in order to ensure that the people of Ontario can feel confident about their electoral system and how it is funded?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I would say to the leader of the third party is that I am committed to an open process. I am committed to making sure that we get input

from every corner of this province, from anyone who wants to give us input, starting with the leaders of the opposition parties.

But I think there are some fundamental directions that have been established for some time in this Legislature. Certainly, on our part, on this side of the House, we believe that there are some pretty clear directions that we need to go in. One of them is the banning of corporate and union donations. I would love to hear from the leaders of the opposition parties about how they think that transition should happen, and any other issues that they think should be included in legislation that can then be broadly and fully publicly debated.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: After 13 years in power, that's quite an epiphany.

My question is for the treasury board president. Has a stakeholder with active files before this minister been asked by the minister, a member of her staff or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party, to raise funds for this minister or the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or a policy change?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we obviously know where this is going. What I can tell you is that I meet with people every single day with a variety of opinions about what we need to do to make Ontario better. It's part of my daily job; I bet it's part of your daily job as well. All of us in this House regularly meet with people who have expertise, who have ideas. I listen to them, and we develop public policy on the basis of what is best for the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I didn't hear "no," so I'll try again.

Has a stakeholder with active files before this minister been made to feel obligated to raise funds for this minister or for the Ontario Liberal Party by the minister, a member of his or her staff, or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or policy change?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock. The deputy House leader is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think every single person in this House ran for office because we want to make this province better. That's what we're doing. The member opposite says she's never fundraised. That's hard to imagine. It might be true. It's hard to imagine.

We made changes. The government party made changes to require real-time public disclosure of donations. That is a very important part of the transparency agenda of this government. Anyone can go online at any time and see who is making donations to what party. I encourage people who are watching at home or even people in this House to actually look and see who is making those donations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

While I definitely understand the thrust and parry of this place and the idea is to allow for some of the steam to be let loose, I just want to remind people that when I say you are warned, the next time I speak to you, you will be named—just to be clear. There are a few people who are on the edge now.

Your wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We believe that the transparency that we brought into donations is the right thing to do. We also think it's time to make the next step and, as you heard, we'll be making changes very soon.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The media are asking about the legality of how cabinet ministers are raising money—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who's the question to, please?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The question is to the Premier.

The media are asking questions about the legality of how cabinet ministers are raising money for the Ontario Liberal Party.

1100

Now the question is: Has the Premier done her due diligence? Has she taken steps to ensure that assurances have been made very clearly from her ministers that their actions are beyond question and, in fact, legal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Given that, in addition, questions are being asked about how cabinet ministers are raising money from organizations that have an interest in the decisions that these ministers themselves make, I'm sure the Premier wants to know that there is absolutely no question about the legality of how this money is being raised.

My question to the Premier is this: Can the Premier tell Ontarians whom she has asked to investigate whether these allegations are true, and will she make this report public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said many times, we all operate in this House under a certain set of rules. Those rules have been in place for a number of years, and I can only assume that everyone on the other side of the House follows them. We are absolutely committed to following those rules.

We have been working on changes already. We intend to bring forward legislation in the spring that will allow for a full public discussion of changes that we need to make. But I think it's pretty clear that some fundamentals need to change. We need to move towards a ban on corporate and union donations. I think that is very, very clear.

I look forward to input from the leaders of the opposition and from their parties as we draft legislation and then we take it out for full public discussion.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Has a stakeholder with active files before this minister been asked by the minister, a member of his or her staff or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party to raise funds for this minister or the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or a policy change?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As my critic knows, I take my job as Minister of Health very, very seriously. An important part of that job is to make sure that I interact with, discuss and get the best possible advice from literally hundreds of individuals around this province on a regular basis.

We have one of the best health care systems because we have the best health care providers and experts. An important part of my job is to interact—I interact with many, many people over the course of a regular day while we're sitting. I've had opportunities to do that on an ongoing basis.

As all members of this Legislature, I believe, engage in fundraising activities, when I engage in fundraising activities, I do that according to the rules that are in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It's easy to note that we didn't hear a straight "no" to that question.

Back to the minister: Has a stakeholder with active files before this minister been made to feel obligated to raise funds for this minister or for the Ontario Liberal Party by the minister, a member of his or her staff or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or a policy change?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No, that's not how it works.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Yes, the member knows that's not how it works.

What I'm very proud of is that, long before the Progressive Conservatives first raised this issue today, long before the NDP first raised this issue today, our Premier has been engaging in a process, which she's outlined, where fundamental changes to the way donations—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Long before it was raised for the first time today—or in the last days since media attention has been drawn to this issue—this Premier has recognized that important changes can and should be made. She has indicated that in the foreseeable future she will be introducing those changes. I look forward to seeing those and I look forward to getting the good advice from the members opposite on how we can further strengthen those rules.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Finance.

Does the Minister of Finance see any issues with asking the companies that he hired and paid to sell off Hydro One to attend his fundraiser dinner and donate thousands of dollars to the Liberal Party of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, as the Premier has explained, it's interesting that the NDP, who receive funds and do fundraisers, like the Progressive Conservatives—we all abide by the rules in this House, as we should, to enable us to support our campaigns.

Let me be clear: My priority is around policy initiating the concerns of Ontarians. That's why the document in the budget is one of the most progressive that we've had in history, talking about the things that matter to Ontarians. That's my priority, that's what drives me, and that's what I care about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's been reported that the Minister of Finance has a quota and he needs to raise half a million dollars for the Ontario Liberal Party. That's a lot of money. Has the minister ever discussed his quota with the Premier of the province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Actually, I haven't. I haven't discussed it with the Premier.

What I do discuss with the Premier are issues around policy, the preparation of the budget, the concerns that we share, as a government, to support the policies that are important to the people of Ontario. That is what we talk about and that is what initiates.

The member opposite, who also fundraises, also does the very same thing as the rest of us to support her campaigns. That is a reality that we have as the rules pertain to it.

I look forward to, and we welcome, any opportunities from the opposition to support the Premier in her initiative to reform the system. We welcome it; we're open to it.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the Minister of Education.

Ensuring students receive the best possible education across Ontario is our government's top priority. Ontario has a lot to be proud of in terms of student achievement, thanks in large part to our great educators and our staff. Our schools are recognized across the country and around the world for excellence in education, and this is something we are extremely proud of.

Minister, this morning you announced the renewed math strategy to help students across the province become better learners. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the Ontario government doing to raise student achievement in mathematics?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member, who I suspect uses her math skills every time she plans a cycling route across the province.

To talk about renewed math, supporting effective learning and teaching in mathematics has been identified as a top priority for Ontario schools. This morning, I was proud to announce that we are dedicating more than \$60 million to help support students across the province to achieve better results in math. Math is a critical requirement for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

The renewed math strategy is informed by research and lessons learned from the education sector itself. It focuses on the needs of students, their families, educators and schools, while encouraging the shared responsibility to support student learning. This strategy also supports our renewed vision for Ontario education with excellence in math.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: We are extremely proud of the investments made towards education. It is important that we will continue to focus on improving the achievement of all students in mathematics, because it not only helps to enhance their full potential, but it contributes to our economic strategy by ensuring a skilled workforce. In fact, that skilled workforce is just one of the reasons Ontario leads North America in terms of foreign direct investment. So I'm pleased to hear that the students in my riding of Burlington will have better supports in place when it comes to mathematics.

Minister, can you please tell this House what types of supports and opportunities you and our government will be providing as part of the renewed math strategy?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Starting next September, key elements of the renewed math strategy will be introduced, including:

- a minimum of 60 minutes each day of protected learning time for effective mathematics instruction and assessment for students in grades 1 to 8;
- up to three math lead teachers in all elementary schools;
- coaching for principals of select secondary schools to lead improvement in math among their students;
- support for learning at home through parent resources that provide helpful tips and information on the math curriculum;
- better access to online math resources and math supports such as Homework Help or SOS Devoirs;
- math support for grades 6 to 9 outside of the school day; and, finally
- opportunities for educators to deepen their knowledge in math learning, teaching and leading, including a dedicated math professional development day to further their school improvement.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mr. Speaker, has any stakeholder with active files before this minister been asked by the minister, a member of his staff or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party to raise funds for this minister or the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or a policy change?

1110

Hon. Ted McMeekin: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is back to the minister. Has any stakeholder with active files before this

minister been made to feel obligated to raise funds for this minister or the Ontario Liberal Party by the minister, a member of his staff or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or a policy change?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: No.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier.

The Minister of Energy told the Ottawa Citizen that he didn't have any ethical issues with using his ministerial portfolio to raise money, but he told the Globe and Mail that he wanted reform.

Can the Premier tell us if the energy minister is okay with the current ministerial quota system or not?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't know how the NDP operates. I don't know what their team ethic is and I don't know how well they work together, but here's the thing: We know as a party that we have to fundraise in order to run our campaigns and do our work. We're a team, and everybody does their bit. That's how it works on this side of the House.

I have no idea how it works in the church basements of the NDP.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Has the Minister of Energy ever discussed his quota with the Premier? And did he ever tell the Premier he wanted to see campaign finance reform?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have not talked with my ministers about quotas. We are part of a team. The only reason I used "church basements" is because the leader of the third party was suggesting that somehow, the fundraising done by the NDP was more pure than the fundraising done by everyone else.

The fact is that we are all working in the best interests of the people of Ontario, talking to people around this province, running our parties so that there can be a political dialogue as part of our democracy.

There has been a set of rules. We are going to change those rules. I look forward to input from the opposition parties.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
New question.

ELECTRIC AND AUTOMATED VEHICLES

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is to the Minister of Transportation.

I was at the 20th annual Newmarket home show over the weekend and had a number of constituents ask me about changes to the Electric Vehicle Incentive Program. Perhaps it was the launch of the new Tesla vehicle that sparked this interest, but actually, I believe it's my constituents' genuine concern for the environment.

I understand the minister recently announced some changes to the Electric Vehicle Incentive Program. Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell members of this House more about these changes and what Ontarians can expect to see under the new program?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Newmarket–Aurora not only for his question, but for taking a very keen interest in issues relating to transportation and how we modernize some of these important programs.

As many members of this Legislature will recall, our government launched our first Electric Vehicle Incentive Program back in 2010—a program that has provided incentives for the purchase of nearly 5,000 electric vehicles in Ontario. I was very pleased to join with Premier Wynne, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure in February to announce some changes to this program, changes that will help make it even easier for Ontarians to switch to an electric vehicle.

Our new modernized program increases the current incentive range for e-vehicles to between \$6,000 and \$10,000. It also provides an opportunity for an additional \$3,000 incentive for vehicles with larger battery capacities. The program will also give up to \$1,000 for the purchase and installation of chargers for private home and business use.

Our government continues to make investments that will help us secure a healthy, clean and prosperous low-carbon future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I want to thank the minister for his response. I know that those living in Newmarket–Aurora are glad to hear about these changes. In fact, this initiative actually builds on our government's December 2015 announcement that an additional \$20 million from Ontario's Green Investment Fund will go towards creating a network of fast-charging public EV charging stations.

This is only one of the progressive investments we're making in the vehicles we drive. I understand in January we also launched a new automated vehicles pilot. Can the minister please tell members of this House more about this new pilot and how it will change the way Ontarians drive?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member again for his follow-up question. He is quite right. On January 1, our government launched a new pilot to allow the testing of automated vehicles on Ontario's roads and highways. The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers has forecasted that, by 2040, autonomous vehicles could account for 75% of all vehicles on North American roads. That is a potential massive shift with respect to how we live and drive, and that's why I'm so proud to see Ontario leading the charge on this new and innovative technology.

Ontario is the very first province in Canada to permit the testing of automated vehicles and related technology on roads. This means that we are the first to enable the nearly 100 companies and institutions involved in the sector to conduct research and development in Ontario rather than in competing jurisdictions. This is another

example of our government's commitment to making those investments that will ensure that Ontario remains a global leader in this sector.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance.

Has a stakeholder with active files before this minister been asked by the minister, a member of his staff or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party to raise funds for this minister or the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or a policy change?

Hon. Charles Sousa: No, but I do see a great list from the Conservative Party which includes very much those very stakeholders. But no, I have not had that pressure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: While we all may raise funds, Speaker, this minister is selling access to meetings—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Come to order, please. Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: While we may all fundraise, it's this minister who gives out contracts and sells access to the government, so my question: Has a stakeholder—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock, please. I'm going to have to ask the member to withdraw because of what he said.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You may finish the question.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Has a stakeholder with active files before this minister been made to feel obligated to raise funds for this minister or the Ontario Liberal Party by the minister, a member of his staff or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or a policy change?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I have already said that that's not the case, but let me be clear: What we are concerned about is this document—the work we do to put policies in place to provide for an increase to minimum wage, free tuition for those students that are most vulnerable, to ensure that we support those with autism, increase funding for hospitals and education, support infrastructure projects and ensure that we have a fair society by breaking the cycle of poverty. All those things, Mr. Speaker, they have voted against. They have voted against the very principles that are important to the people of Ontario. That's our priority—nothing else.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier.

The Premier has acknowledged that former cabinet minister John Gerretsen complained to her about his fundraising quotas. Will the Premier tell Ontarians what she said to John Gerretsen when he complained about the ethics of cabinet ministers being given fundraising quotas?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I've said publicly, and the member opposite can look at my comments from last week, is that many of the comments that John Gerretsen made have become part of the discussion that we're having right now and they have fed into my conviction that we do need to make changes, that moving to ban corporate and union donations is the direction we need to go in. As I've said, I look forward to input from the opposition parties, and then I look forward to a full public debate, Mr. Speaker, as legislation goes to committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: The Premier has acknowledged that John Gerretsen complained about using his ministerial portfolio to raise money for the Ontario Liberal Party. Other ministers are calling for changes.

1120

How many other ministers have complained to the Premier about having to use their ministerial portfolios to raise money for the Liberal Party?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As has been said, that is not how it works. We are a team. We raise money. We raise money to do the work of the party, as I expect the NDP and the Conservatives both do. We all operate within a set of rules, and those rules are going to change.

I look forward to input from the opposition parties and I look forward to a full public discussion as legislation goes out for consultation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Minister, last January, you officially launched four new streams for the Jobs and Prosperity Fund, a 10-year, \$2.7-billion support fund, which includes the new economy stream, the Food and Beverage Growth Fund, the Forestry Growth Fund and the Strategic Partnerships Stream. As you've said before, we are focusing our investments in order to help smaller businesses scale up, to continue to strengthen our commitment to innovation, to create high-value jobs and to target key industries that will act as our anchor investments in Ontario.

But at the same time, there have been critics who have suggested that we are picking winners and losers, and they have expressed concerns about the transparency of our investments. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please inform this Legislature if those concerns are legitimate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me begin by saying how proud we are of the investments we've made in our business support initiatives through the years. In fact, I want all Ontarians to be aware of each of those investments, because they've proven to be hugely successful in creating jobs and attracting investment to our province. Most of our

investments are already available online, and we welcome any public interest in those important initiatives.

In all, we've invested \$2.8 billion since 2004, leveraging \$29 billion in private sector investment, and creating and retaining 160,000 jobs.

As for picking winners and losers: We are picking winners. We're investing in growth firms and innovation leaders, and we're driving to compete globally. That's what you need to do to compete in today's competitive global economy. We're trying to help our fast runners run faster so we can build an economy we can be proud to pass on to our kids and grandkids.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. It's very encouraging to learn that there are measures in place to ensure transparency and accountability for all our businesses, as we're providing strong supports.

Minister, I know that you've been very busy lately announcing partnerships across the province of Ontario in Waterloo, Ottawa, Markham, Brantford, London, Hamilton and other areas of the province. In my own community of Kitchener-Waterloo, my constituents were very excited to welcome new jobs at Sandvine, an innovation leader that is going global. I know that we were very happy to host both the minister and the Premier at a recent tour in my community.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell this House about that visit and other companies that we have been partnering with lately?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd be delighted to. I want to share a few of our recent investments with the Legislature. We've partnered with Mitsui High-tec, an advanced manufacturing company producing parts for electric vehicles, creating 48 new highly skilled jobs in your riding, Mr. Speaker, of Brantford. Our \$2-million investment leveraged \$38 million in private sector investment.

We've partnered with Baylis Medical to support a research and manufacturing expansion in Mississauga. We invested \$4.2 million, leveraging \$32.5 million in private sector investment, creating 84 jobs and retaining 194 more.

We also partnered with Sandvine, as the member indicated, in KW, an ICT innovation success story here in Ontario. We invested \$15 million, leveraging \$169 million in private sector investment, creating 75 new jobs and retaining 267.

These are good investments contributing to, in all, 160,000 jobs created and retained here in the province of Ontario.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Bill Walker: If sincere, I wonder why the Premier and her government did not make the changes when the electoral officer, Greg Essensa, raised this twice in this Legislature during his report, and myself—I raised it as a private member's bill last October, and my colleague Rick Nicholls raised it before me. If they were truly

sincere, if they truly felt this was unfair, they would have already had legislation changes. They wouldn't be dragging it out so they could continue to fundraise over the next year, probably by the time they get it done, to their benefit.

I ask the Premier: Are you really sincere? And why is it not already in legislation like the rest of the provinces of Canada and the federal government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've said we're bringing the legislation in this spring. We're going to have a public discussion about the legislation.

But as I have said—make no mistake—there will be a new set of rules. That doesn't mean that people will stop having to raise funds. The reality is that in order for our democracy to function, parties need to be able to work with, communicate with, run campaigns and work with the public. That is part of our democratic process.

So there will be new rules in place. I look forward to the input from the opposition and from the third party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, it's a matter of trust. This was brought to this Legislature by an officer of this Legislature, who said that you need to make changes—two reports ago. This is yet again, "We got caught. We've got the heat turned up by the media," and now the Premier and her cabinet are saying, "Oh, we need to do something, but we need time." If you were truly sincere, there are other provinces whose legislation we could borrow today. If she was really sincere, we could already have had this.

We do need to get it to a select committee so we actually have some say. We're very concerned that they would just take this, like they did with the Green Energy Act, for example, and ram it through under their provisions.

But we need to ask about the sincerity. We need to ask about how much Ontarians trust this Premier and her government to truly make changes. Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that this government will actually do the right thing for a change and ensure that there is fairness in all of this legislation. I want to ask the Premier: Have you held any fundraisers with donors in the room who could truly—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member knows full well, we announced last June that we are committed to addressing the recommendations that have been made by the Chief Electoral Officer, recommendations that were made on the 2014 election. We are committed to that. We said we were, and we're moving forward.

But I have to say that when I read in the press that the opposition was looking for a select committee, on top of bringing legislation forward and having a public discussion as a result of committee hearings, the first thing that came to my mind is that they actually want to stall, that they actually want a longer process, and that's unacceptable. The status quo is not acceptable.

We're bringing forward legislation this spring and we're going to move forward and make those changes.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, good morning to you. My question is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Good morning, Percy.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, can the Premier explain why she believes the Liberal government should be making the decisions about all political parties' fund campaigns and why she believes this process should not be led by Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't know if the member heard what I said to the last question. The fact is that the Chief Electoral Officer has made recommendations. Some of them pertain directly to this discussion that has been happening in the public realm in the last couple of weeks, and some of them go beyond that, but we have accepted those recommendations, we're working on them and we're going to be bringing forward legislation.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that there will be a broad and complete public consultation as we bring that legislation in the public realm. I look forward to the input from the opposition leader and the leader of the third party, after consultation with their colleagues about what they would like to see in the legislation, so that it can be debated publicly. I look forward to that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, the Premier insists that she'll take this process through committee. As we know, she also said that the budget would reflect input from the finance committee's pre-budget consultations. But as we all know, the ink was drying on the budget before the committee was done hearing from the experts and Ontarians alike.

We need to ensure that this process is open and isn't up to one single political party. Will the Premier agree to have this process headed by Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I've been clear about what the process should be, going forward. I look forward to the input from the leaders of the opposition parties. I trust that they will be talking to their colleagues and that they will engage in a very energetic and enthusiastic way in the public discussion that will follow as legislation goes forward. That is what is required of us. It is what is necessary in order for us to come to good policy decisions.

As I said, I think there are some very clear directions, whether it's from the Chief Electoral Officer or the public debate that has ensued for the last couple of weeks around the banning of corporate and union donations. We need to get on that. That's why we're moving the legislation up. We're going to bring that legislation forward in the spring rather than in the fall.

1130

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Minister, as you know, every day there are women across the province who experience domestic violence, and this devastating reality can affect people from any community or any walk of life.

I know that your ministry provides violence-against-women agencies across this province with funding to support women and their children who have experienced domestic violence. These hard-working agencies, such as Maison Interlude House in my riding, in Hawkesbury, provide vital services such as emergency shelter, counselling services and housing supports to help women and their children who require these services.

But we all know that there are unique challenges experienced by shelters in rural, remote and northern communities. Speaker, through you: Can the minister please tell us how her ministry is recognizing and helping to address these challenges?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for the question. I understand he celebrated his birthday this weekend, so happy birthday.

Our government certainly takes the role of supporting women and their children who have experienced domestic violence very seriously. I have had the opportunity to visit some 21 VAW shelters across the province since I became minister. I'm very aware of the unique service delivery challenges being experienced by rural, remote and northern shelters. That's why, in January, I visited the Women's Rural Resource Centre, Strathroy and Area to announce that we would be establishing a Rural Realities Fund. This new two-year, \$1-million fund will help shelters and agencies in these communities address their local challenges. I'm pleased to let this House know that my ministry is now welcoming applications to the Rural Realities Fund.

We know this is just part of the solution. We will continue to work with the agencies in these communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for that information on the Rural Realities Fund. I understand that rural shelters and agencies were very pleased with this recent announcement. For example, I know that the chair of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses and executive director of the Leeds and Grenville Interval House said that she was thrilled with the recent announcement for the Rural Realities Fund. She commended our government on our commitment to improving the lives of women and girls in Ontario, and she looked forward to continued collaboration. She said that for her shelter, their front-line staff cover over 3,300 square kilometres and a population of over 96,000 people, and these funds would be used to improve their outreach and counselling services to women living with violence.

Minister, I understand that in your recent announcement, you also spoke about the crisis response framework that will help your agencies develop coordinated plans. Could you please share with this House the work the ministry is doing on this file?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: When we consider the tragic shootings in Wilno last fall and the most recent shootings

in Odessa last month, we know that there is more that we must do. That is why I also announced that we would begin working with agencies, my ministry's VAW expert group and with other ministries to develop and implement a crisis response framework. We need to work together with the VAW sector and other community partners to help identify the steps we can take to prevent these tragedies from occurring, and we will work with VAW agencies to find ways to better support them when crises do occur.

The creation of the Rural Realities Fund and crisis response framework were recommendations to the province from the Premier's Roundtable on Violence Against Women. Both of these initiatives support the Ontario government's goals of ending violence against women and providing better supports for survivors.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Transportation.

Has a stakeholder with an active file before this minister been asked by the minister, a member of his or her staff or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party to raise funds for this minister or the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or policy change?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Of course, I thank the member opposite for his interest in this topic. As the Premier has said repeatedly today, as have colleagues on this side of the Legislature, in consultation with both other party leaders and other stakeholders interested in this topic, over the next number of days and weeks there will be a modernization or an update brought to political financing laws here in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, I think it must be clear by now, because there have been multiple responses on this side of the Legislature, of course, that we look forward to working closely in collaboration with members from both opposition parties and others external to this building to make sure that we get it right, which I think is of utmost importance to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the minister: Has a stakeholder with active files before this minister been made to feel obligated to raise funds for this minister or the Ontario Liberal Party by the minister, a member of his staff or a member of the Ontario Liberal Party in order to obtain a meeting, an approval or policy change?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I believe I've answered that question by and large with the first response that I gave.

What's interesting to me, I have to say, is that last week I know a number of people on this side of the Legislature, in the government caucus, were out across the province of Ontario making fundamentally important announcements in a variety of communities across Ontario.

Within my own area of responsibility, I remember being in Wellington-Halton Hills last week to announce funding support for the Morriston bypass, for example. I

also remember standing alongside the member from Barrie in Orillia announcing cycling infrastructure funding, and doing the same thing in Markham—Connecting Links funding.

To what the finance minister said earlier today about Ontario budget 2016, this is what this government is focused on: building the province up, moving it forward, a stronger economy and a better quality of life. That's what this Premier and this government are working hard on.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier.

My leader and our caucus have put the proposal forward that the Chief Electoral Officer be charged with looking at what changes need to happen to the fundraising rules in the province of Ontario. We know if the Chief Electoral Officer does it, it's going to be non-partisan. It will be an issue that the public will be involved in and we're going to come back with something that's workable.

Why does the government and why does this Premier refuse to go that route and instead have a process where she's going to control the outcome? Why should people have any trust in you, considering your record on fundraising?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm sure that the public would like to know that the NDP and the Conservatives would bring forward suggestions on that legislation. I said earlier that I've responded to the letters from both the leader of the Conservatives and the leader of the NDP. I've said I welcome a meeting with them so that they can bring forward their suggestions. Then we need to have a full public discussion as part of the commentary on the legislation. I think that is absolutely the way to go.

I think it's quite clear from having looked at this—this last week was not the first time that we have thought about this.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite may want to chuckle, but the fact is that we have been looking at this. We understood that there needed to be changes. That's why we're able to bring legislation forward this spring and move on it quickly. As I say, I look forward to input from the parties opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROB FORD

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I rise today to pay my respects to a friend and to a public servant who had a truly unique bond with his constituents.

There have been many tributes paid to Rob Ford. Many politicians, such as myself, and journalists have offered eulogies of one kind or another for a man who loved his family and the city of Toronto above all else. While I like to think Rob would appreciate this, I know the much more meaningful tributes have come from his family, the kids he coached and the thousands of people who turned out to say a final goodbye at city hall.

Rob dedicated himself to being a father, son, brother, coach and mayor. He was a champion for a lot of people who don't often find politicians in their corner. Over the last couple of weeks, I know thousands of people have been retelling their personal stories of meeting Rob—having him help them out or call them up. Those anecdotes and the bigger story they tell about a man who had a radically down-to-earth approach to public service are a powerful legacy.

I admired Rob for his leadership. He stood up for everyday people and always tried to do what was right for taxpayers. His constituency work was absolutely legendary.

Rob Ford was larger than life, and his loss has been profoundly felt. Our prayers and thoughts remain with Renata, Stephanie, Doug Jr., the city of Toronto and Ford nation.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: April is Autism Awareness Month, and this government has chosen to mark it by announcing changes to the Autism Intervention Program that would deprive children of IBI after they were told they would get it. Under the new rules, IBI will not be available to children over the age of five.

I have raised the issue of extensive wait-lists for autism treatment before in this Legislature. Not once did I expect that this government's solution would be to simply deny service to the many who were on the list. Over the past few days, I have heard from literally hundreds of families affected by this decision. Disappointed, devastated, shattered, shocked, disgusted, angry, ashamed and scared—these are just some of the words that they have used to describe their feelings as they recount their personal stories. Many of them tell me of the startling improvement they saw in their child after the age of five as a result of IBI treatment.

Now the government is pulling the rug out from under them. In some cases, they were told within the past few weeks that IBI would be starting this month, only to be told just a few days later that, because their child had reached the age of five, this was no longer the case. One parent reports that she was told just weeks ago that her son was an ideal candidate for IBI.

This government needs to think again about this plan and the effect that these changes will have on the children who so desperately need treatment.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: April 1 marked the beginning of Be a Donor Month here in Ontario. Each April,

the Trillium Gift of Life Network, through their Be a Donor campaign, raises awareness of the issues surrounding organ and tissue donation and those who are waiting for organ and tissue transplants.

Over 1,600 people in Ontario are currently waiting for organ and tissue transplants, and, unfortunately, we will lose someone every three days due to the lack of a suitable donor. With close to 30% of Ontarians registering their consent to be a donor, it is clear that the people in this province care deeply about helping their friends, their loved ones and their neighbours. But we can and must do more. Initiatives like Trillium Gift of Life's Be a Donor Month help underscore the importance of registering to be a donor, as a single organ and tissue donor can save up to eight lives.

This year's campaign focuses on the reasons why people support organ and tissue donation. Speaker, I'm proud to say that I'm a registered donor. I encourage all of my colleagues in this House and every Ontarian to lend their support to this initiative by sharing photographs of themselves, their family and friends, with messages of why they support organ and tissue donation, with #myreason and #beadonor. By sharing these powerful messages of love and support with our social networks, we can encourage more Ontarians to become donors. Most importantly, if you have not already done so, please take a moment to register to be a donor. Or, you can do so at any ServiceOntario location. It only takes a few minutes, which can help save many lives.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: More than 30 years after discussion on the Highway 6 Morriston bypass began, last week we were able to welcome the Minister of Transportation to Wellington-Halton Hills as he announced the approval of this needed project. Working together, we've been pushing for the bypass for years, and I want to thank Mayor Dennis Lever, the township of Puslinch council and staff, the county of Wellington, the Morriston bypass coalition and many others who expressed support, including the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Education.

However, I need to remind the Minister of Transportation that there are still many other important transportation needs in Wellington-Halton Hills. For example, last August I was approached by the town of Halton Hills about the need for a long-term truck strategy, including the possibility of a bypass on Highway 7 around Acton. We immediately went to work on it. I have approached the minister on several occasions in the Legislature to discuss this issue with him and have also written to him a number of times.

Last fall, I also tabled a resolution calling on the minister to place the Highway 7 Acton bypass on his ministry's five-year plan for highway construction. I also arranged a meeting in January with the minister's office between the minister and a delegation from the town of Halton Hills, which included Mayor Rick Bonnette and

regional chair Gary Carr. The town has offered to cover half the costs of the study as an initial step towards a constructive partnership. But we all realize that an Acton bypass is not going to be built overnight. It's important that we get moving forward because we know that, working together, we make progress.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today I would like to bring to the House's attention the critical status of health care delivery in London. The health care system in our city is buckling under pressures caused by lack of proper funding from this government.

Recently, the system failed Sarp and Vicky Hankali when they took their baby daughter Alexis to Children's Hospital for a diagnostic surgery. They were instructed to stop feeding their daughter on Sunday night for surgery Monday afternoon, only to have the hospital continually push back the surgery while Alexis suffered hunger and confusion for two days. News reporters say that a surgeon apologized for the delays, citing staff cuts as the reasons they could not get baby Alexis into surgery on time. CBC News requested a response from the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Health distanced itself from their responsibility.

The Hankali family experienced first-hand the devastating impact of continued cuts to our health care system. London Health Sciences Centre and St. Joseph's Hospital both announced last week that they would be forced to cut staff hours and positions due to lack of adequate funding from the province.

Londoners deserve a health care system that delivers. I am calling on the Minister of Health to stop the cuts to Ontario hospitals.

COMMUNITY AWARDS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: On Saturday, March 19, I had the privilege of recognizing the contributions of two outstanding Barrie residents by presenting them with Leading Women/Leading Girls Building Communities Award. Shannon Murree and Suzy Kies exemplify community leadership, volunteerism and advocacy, and have become mentors to many through their dedication to improving the lives of women and girls.

A local real estate consultant, Ms. Murree is head of the Mompreneurs of Simcoe county, mentoring professional women in Barrie by using her ability to build women up and support them in their business endeavours. She organized the Shoebox Project, which provides necessities to battered women, and has been a long-time supporter of the Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie. Shannon has also worked with Dress for Success, a program that provides business attire for women in need who are searching for a new career. She is the recipient of Barrie's Order of the Spirit Catcher and has been nominated multiple times for the Women in Business awards. She is a passionate advocate and philanthropist, focused on empowering women.

Ms. Kies is a leader in the indigenous community and is currently president of the Aboriginal Peoples' Commission of Ontario. She also works at the Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre, where she develops programs for children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders while also helping women expand their employment skills. She has put in countless volunteer hours mentoring young women, and is now also involved in the Youth Quest program, demonstrating an openness to and acceptance of youth.

It is a privilege to recognize the outstanding contributions of these women on behalf of the government of Ontario.

1310

CANADIAN DAIRY XPO

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise today in anticipation of the fourth annual Canadian Dairy XPO. The Dairy XPO is taking place on Wednesday and Thursday in Stratford. It is the largest commercial dairy stage in Canada, showcasing the latest in dairy innovations.

Since its inception in 2013, attendance has grown from 10,000 to over 15,000 people. It attracts farmers from across the country and the world. It has grown so much that this year there will be a new cow coliseum to accommodate the growing number of exhibitors.

There is also a new initiative at the Dairy XPO. Organizers have partnered with the Dairy Farmers of Canada to run the Blue Cow Spirit campaign. All attendees are encouraged to wear their blue cow gear to create a sea of blue travelling through the XPO. Mr. Speaker, I must say, that's a great colour choice. Wearing your blue cow apparel will save you \$10 on your admission charge.

I always enjoy attending the Canadian Dairy XPO, and I'll be there again this year. I welcome everyone to attend. I'll be serving breakfast on Wednesday and Thursday mornings and touring the XPO to learn about the latest innovations.

I would like to recognize Jordon Underhill, the general manager of the Canadian Dairy XPO, and his entire team for the hard work that goes into organizing each year's event. I would also like to extend my thanks to all the volunteers who make the event possible. Finally, my thanks to the city of Stratford for their contribution to the success of the XPO.

I invite you all to attend the Canadian Dairy XPO from April 6 to 7 at the Stratford Rotary Complex.

PUBLIC HEROES AWARDS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House today to congratulate Constable Jim Lambe from the Toronto Police Service 12 Division, in my riding of York South-Weston, on being awarded a Public Heroes Award 2016.

I first met Constable Jim Lambe about nine years ago, when I was first elected as an MPP. His unwavering passion to build a safer community through his work as an

officer, volunteer and community liaison became apparent to me immediately.

Constable Lambe is a tireless community leader. His participation in the community at countless events throughout the years demonstrates his dedication to the residents of York South-Weston. He is a mentor to people of all ages, especially youth and newcomers. His drive and determination is admirable to all.

The Public Heroes Awards started in 2011 to recognize the outstanding service of Toronto police, fire and paramedic services in maintaining public safety in the city of Toronto. In 2014, the scope was broadened to the entire greater Toronto area. The goal of the awards is to recognize the dedication and excellence of individual members of the police, fire and paramedic services in the GTA for delivering their services in an ethnically and culturally diverse environment.

Congratulations, Constable Jim Lambe, on receiving a Public Heroes Award. It is well deserved, as you are a hero to many of us.

GRANDVIEW CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to follow up and to acknowledge, once again, Grandview Children's Centre. Grandview is the only children's treatment centre in Durham, providing expert pediatric treatment and rehabilitation services to well over 5,000 children and youth with special needs and their families. Grandview has been operating in the region of Durham for 63 years. Its headquarters have always been in Oshawa, and they've always done a great job.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services, MPP MacCharles, officially announced on March 29 \$333 million in new funding for autism, as promised in the recent Ontario budget. We listened to families and the clinical experts and heard that the current system was not working, and we have responded with an investment that will help more children receive the critical services that they need.

I want to proceed and tell you that I know that Grandview Children's Centre is very happy with this investment. In fact, executive director Lorraine Sunstrum-Mann has said, "Grandview Children's Centre is thrilled by these significant investments in children's services. This will change the lives of families with kids with special needs. For families in Durham region, this means getting the right services sooner."

Grandview Children's Centre has much to be excited about these days, including a very recent donation from TD Bank of \$200,000 during a ceremonial puck drop with the Oshawa Generals Hockey Club at the GM Centre. The cheque from TD represents the largest single monetary donation ever received by Grandview Children's Foundation. We want to acknowledge the town of Ajax for their great contribution—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la justice, et je propose son adoption.

I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 119, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements personnels sur la santé, à apporter certaines modifications connexes et à abroger et à remplacer la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements sur la qualité des soins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed. Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Ms. Soo Wong: I beg leave to present a report on pre-budget consultation 2016 from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Wong presents the report by the committee.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, this past winter, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its pre-budget consultation from January 18 to February 2. Public hearings were held in Hamilton, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Ottawa and, for two days, in Toronto in the Legislative Building.

The committee heard from 146 witnesses and received some 114 written submissions from agencies, associations, community groups, local administrative bodies, municipalities, organizations, transfer payment partners, unions and individuals. On behalf of the committee, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank each one of them for taking the time to share their views with the committee.

I also wanted to thank the committee members and the staff for their commitment, hard work and co-operation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for the report.

Just a note: it's very rare that I would hear any heckling during reports by committees.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I beg leave to present the second report of 2016 from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Naidoo-Harris presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I would like to thank the committee and support staff for all their hard work and diligence in preparing this thorough report. I know that all involved have put a great deal of time and effort into this, and it's fantastic to see it culminated in this important document. It makes several recommendations that will be key to our progress moving forward.

Thank you again, and I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Naidoo-Harris moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS MODERNIZATION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES ÉLECTIONS MUNICIPALES

Mr. McMeekin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 181, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

1320

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I rise today to introduce the Municipal Elections Modernization Act, which would amend the Municipal Elections Act. Our proposed package of reforms would, if passed, help ensure that the rules governing how municipal leaders are elected are clear and reflect how to run modern campaigns and elections. This package of reforms responds to the real and evol-

ing needs of our communities, including providing municipalities with the option to introduce ranked-ballot voting for the 2018 municipal elections.

ONTARIO DOWN SYNDROME DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA JOURNÉE ONTARIENNE DE LA TRISOMIE 21

Mr. Dickson moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 182, An Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day / Projet de loi 182, Loi proclamant la Journée ontarienne de la trisomie 21.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Joe Dickson: The bill proclaims March 21 in each year as Ontario Down Syndrome Day.

PETITIONS

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas it is right for Ontario youth to be educated in their home communities;

“Whereas accessible schools that students can walk, bike or take a short ride to promote healthy lifestyles, a cleaner environment and emotional well-being;

“Whereas the economies of smaller rural towns are directly strengthened and vitalized by high schools in their own communities;

“Whereas community schools best serve special populations;

“Whereas rural high schools more than 15 km from the next high school should be considered eligible for enhanced top-up funding;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To direct support and resources to Ontario rural community schools, such as Harrow District High School, so as to provide and sustain accessible education for youth within their home communities, preserving and sustaining rural town culture that diversifies the fabric of the province of Ontario.”

I support this petition, affix my name and send it with page Sohan.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: I received this petition from a woman in my riding named Michelle Campbell and her daughter Avery, and it reads as follows:

“Don’t Balance the Budget on the Backs of Children with ASD.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention (IBI); and

“Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

“Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

“Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

“Whereas the wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government;

“Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

“Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation.”

I couldn’t agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page MacFarlane to bring to the Clerk.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime. When public education about sexual violence and harassment is not prioritized, myths and attitudes informed by misogyny become prevalent. This promotes rape culture.... Sexual violence and harassment survivors too often feel revictimized by the systems set in place to support them. The voices of survivors, in all their diversity, need to be amplified. Survivors too often face wait times for counselling services as our population grows and operating costs rise for sexual assault support services.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment’s final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate

about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change; fund sexual assault support services adequately....; and address attrition rates within our justice system, including examining 'unfounded' cases, developing enhanced prosecution models and providing free legal advice for survivors."

I agree with this and will attach my initials and give this to page Harry.

HYDRO DAM

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition in support of public safety in Bala. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas to select a proponent for a hydroelectric generating station proposed at the Bala Falls, the Ministry of Natural Resources (now the MNRF) released a request for proposals in 2005 which included the requirement that 'For the North Bala dam, demonstrate consideration of the extensive aesthetic, recreational, social and economic (i.e. tourism) values in the area of the proposed development'; and

"Whereas through a competitive process, a proponent was selected based solely on their proposal, which included the commitment that their proposed project would 'not generally diminish the public's enjoyment of the area for swimming, boating, fishing....'; and

"Whereas the tragic 2008 drowning of a 16-year-old boy at the nearby hydroelectric generating station due to the turbulent water exiting that station confirms that such generating stations can be deadly; and

"Whereas it would be unprecedented and dangerous to locate a hydroelectric generating station in the middle of an extremely popular in-water recreational area, and the public has not been informed how this could be done safely in Bala; and

"Whereas the Lifesaving Society is a national organization with expertise that includes assessing the safety of in-water recreational areas and measures; and

"Whereas the township of Muskoka Lakes has declared they are an unwilling host municipality for this proposed project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario not allow construction of the proposed Bala generating station to proceed until a safe operating plan detailing the required safety measures, such as start-up warning and the location of fencing and the downstream safety boom, has been presented by the proponent to the public, and this plan has been found to be acceptable by the Lifesaving Society."

Mr. Speaker, I support having a safe operating plan for the Bala Falls, and I'd like to present this petition to Vanessa.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a "Petition to Stop the Proposed Changes to the Age Grouping and Ratios in Child

Care." These petitions are from across the province. There are nearly 6,000 signatures here, and there are more coming.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current proposal will allow younger children to be placed in a child care setting with less adults to have quality interactions with, as well as provide significantly less educational opportunities;

"Whereas research has proven that the quality of provisions in child care is directly related to ratios (number of teachers to number of children), staff qualifications and training, and group size;

"Whereas reducing the number of RECEs in the ratio setting disregards decades of research and evidence on brain development and the need to have individuals with very specific knowledge and training who can translate this research into practice;

"Whereas Ontario already has one of the highest ratios of young children to adults, these changes will ensure that Ontario has the lowest quality of child care;

"Whereas the changes to the age grouping will provide less quality care for children aged 12 months to 30 months, by placing them in groups with higher ratios of children to adults. The workload will increase for the RECEs, leading to a decrease in quality and education for the children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the government's plan to change the age groupings and ratios in Ontario child care centres."

I fully support this petition and will sign my name to it and send it to the table with page Ariel.

1330

ELDER ABUSE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas today, there are more seniors 65 and over than children under the age of 15, both in Ontario and across Canada;

"Whereas there are currently more than two million seniors aged 65 and over—approximately 15% of the population and this number is expected to double in the next 25 years;

"Whereas Elder Abuse Ontario stated that between 40,000 and 200,000 seniors living in Ontario experienced or are experiencing elder abuse;

"Whereas research showed that abuse against seniors takes many forms and is often perpetrated by family members;

"Whereas financial and emotional abuse are the most frequently reported elder abuse cases;

"Whereas current Ontario legislation incorporates the Residents' Bill of Rights, mandates abuse prevention, investigation and reporting of seniors living in either long-term-care facilities or retirement homes;

"Whereas the majority of the seniors currently and in the future live in the community;

"Whereas Bill 148, if passed, will ensure seniors living in the community have the same protection and support as those seniors living in long-term-care facilities and retirement homes;

"Whereas Bill 148, if passed, will require regulated health professionals to report elder abuse or neglect to the public guardian and trustee office;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly pass Bill 148, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, requiring health professionals to report any reasonable suspicion that a senior living in the community is being abused or neglected to the public guardian and trustee office."

I fully support this petition, and I will sign it and give my petition to page Jerry.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition entitled "Stop the Closure of Provincial and Demonstration Schools." It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas provincial and demonstration schools in Ontario provide education programs and services for students with special education needs;

"Whereas there are four provincial and three demonstration schools for anglophone deaf, blind, deaf-blind and/or severely learning-disabled students, as well as one school for francophone students who are deaf, deaf-blind and/or have severe learning disabilities;

"Whereas even with early identification and early intervention, local school boards are not equipped to handle the needs of these students, who are our most vulnerable children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(a) oppose the closure of provincial and demonstration schools and recognize that these specialized schools are the last hope for many children;

"(b) stop the enrollment freeze at these schools in order for students and their families, who have exhausted all other available resources, to have access to equal education for themselves without added costs, to which they, like all students, are entitled to."

Mr. Speaker, I have affixed my name to this petition.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Wayne Gates: "Petition to Stop the Plan to Increase Seniors' Drug Costs.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario will require most seniors to pay significantly more for prescription drugs, starting on August 1st, 2016, under changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit;

"Whereas most seniors will be required to pay a higher annual deductible of \$170 and higher copayments each and every time they fill a prescription at their pharmacy;

"Whereas the average Ontario senior requires at least eight different types of drugs each year to stay healthy and maintain their independence; and

"Whereas many seniors on fixed incomes simply cannot afford to pay more for prescription drugs and should not be forced to skip medications that they can no longer afford and to put their health in jeopardy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the government's plans to make most Ontario seniors pay more for necessary prescription drugs and instead work to expand prescription drug coverage for all Ontarians."

I'll sign my name to the petition and give it to the page.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Chris Ballard: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water."

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have an important petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas a 61-year-old Alzheimer's patient was kept in a hospital ER for eight nights due to lack of beds;

"Whereas the crisis centre isn't set up to help patients whose needs are so great they need treatment in a psychiatric ward;

"Whereas the crisis centre only has five beds;

"Whereas none of the beds are high-needs beds;

"Whereas the number of people seeking help from the Alzheimer Society has soared 50% in two years;

"Whereas patients have the right to be treated with dignity and care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately reform existing health care legislation and policies, and specifically provide emergency funding to increase staff and available beds in all ERs in Ontario;

"Provide immediate funding to increase number of long-term beds in SW Ontario;

"Provide immediate funding staff a team of experts to find ways to reduce violence among those with dementia in long-term care...."

I support this petition and send it with page Aarbhi.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to read—thousands of signatures—a petition, on behalf of students, parents, alumni and concerned staff and teachers, to stop the closure of provincial and demonstration schools.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas provincial and demonstration schools in Ontario provide education programs and services for students with special education needs;

"Whereas there are four provincial and three demonstration schools for anglophone deaf, blind, deaf-blind and/or severely learning-disabled students, as well as one school for francophone students who are deaf, deaf-blind and/or have severe learning disabilities;

"Whereas even with early identification and early intervention, local school boards are not equipped to handle the needs of these students, who are our most vulnerable children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(a) oppose the closure of provincial and demonstration schools and recognize that these specialized schools are the last hope for many children;

"(b) stop the enrollment freeze at these schools in order for students and their families, who have exhausted all other available resources, to have access to equal education for themselves without added costs, to which they, like all students, are entitled to."

I support this petition and give it to page Joshua to deliver to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S TRAILS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE SOUTIEN AUX SENTIERS DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur les sentiers de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. Before I begin, I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down the NDP lead on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane is seeking unanimous consent of the House to stand down the New Democratic lead on this bill. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on legislation that might affect the people of Ontario—in this case, Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 and to amend various Acts.

This legislation could and will have a big impact on the residents of my riding. I'm going to let our critic focus on the whole province; I'm going to focus on Timiskaming–Cochrane, and some of these issues will be very relevant to the rest of the province.

As you all know, I live in northern Ontario. One of the biggest winter sports we have in northern Ontario is snowmobiling, and it actually brings—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thought it was feeding the fire.

1340

Mr. John Vanthof: We do that out of necessity.

Snowmobiling is not only for locals. We bring in millions and millions of dollars annually from people who come from throughout the province, the country, the continent and from around the world to snowmobile in northern Ontario. That's only possible because of the hard work of snowmobile clubs across the province.

I'm going to give a shout-out to the snowmobile clubs in my riding for starters. I've got the Polar Bear Riders, the Jackpine Snowmobile Club, the A14 Task Force snowmobile club, the Golden Corridor snowmobile club, the Near North Trail Association, the Elk Lake Trail Blazers snowmobile club, the West Nipissing Snowmobile Club, the Nipissing Veuve River Snowmobile Club, and the French River Snow Devils. And the two nearest and dearest to my heart are Club Echo, because I'm a property owner who allows Club Echo to use my land, and the Tri-Town Sno Travellers, because I'm a member.

So I have a conflict of interest here because I am a snowmobiler. I started out on a 250 Elan a long, long time ago, a Ski-Doo. It was broken and frozen all the time. We had to become mechanics. We did a lot more fixing than we did snowmobiling. Now I have a Renegade Backcountry, and I put on quite a few kilometres with my friends. Snowmobiling has come a long way because we snowmobile; we no longer fix. They've come a long, long way. It's a great feeling.

Why this sport is possible is because all the people and these snowmobile clubs groom the trails. What's unique about snowmobiling is that a lot of the trails are on private land, and the private landowners give permission for the clubs to use their land. That's what makes the sport truly fantastic: On a snowmobile, you can see parts of Ontario that are inaccessible to the public in any other way. You can drive, depending on where the trail goes, past livestock farms, past people's personal picnic spots. You can drive by fantastic spots. It's one of the things that makes it so incredible.

I'm just going to give a shout-out to my colleague from Timmins-James Bay, because on my birthday we went from Cochrane, stayed at the Westway Motel, and we went to the Abitibi Canyon loop on the snow machine. We started off in my riding and went to his riding. One of the 10 things you've got to see on a snowmobile before you give up your career is the Abitibi Canyon.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Been there.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. The fact that you can go on private land is a blessing, and what makes it really unique is that private landowners have no material gain from this at all. Typically, when a snowmobile trail goes across farmland, the farmer loses money because the crops are impacted. So farmers—and I'm going to speak as a farmer because that's who I know best—do this as community members, because they know how much it brings to the community and they're proud to be part of this system. So the system is working fairly well.

And then we get Bill 100. Actually, there are some good provisions in Bill 100. It creates a Trails Week, which is great. It does make some changes regarding liability—so taking liability away from the landowner. That's great. People have been pushing for that for a long time. Where it gets kind of murky and where landowners—and there's a group called the Ontario Landowners. I'm not a member. Sometimes I say "landowners"; I should say "property owners," because I don't really agree with some of the things the landowners are saying on this issue. If I say "landowner," I'm not speaking for them. I'm a property owner. Sometimes I mispronounce the word.

What this bill proposes to do is that a property owner could give an easement—to a snowmobile club, in this case—and there's a reason for this. I'll give a shout-out to the president of the Tri-Town Sno Travellers, Bill Ramsay. I talked to him about this bill. He gave me an example: If there's a farm or a piece of land that you're going go across and the snowmobile club needs to put a bridge there and the bridge is a quarter-million dollars,

right now there's no guarantee other than a handshake with the landowner that they can access that bridge after it's put up. If they could have an easement to get to that bridge—that's why this would be a good bill. That's a good point.

I'm not going to give them in the House, but there are places in my riding where this bill makes a lot of sense. But where it causes some issues is with easements, because when a farmer hears the word "easement," he hears the words "loss of control of his land." He hears the word "lawyer," which is going to cost him money, right? And you say, "Farmers must be a very suspicious bunch." No, they're not. Neither are the other property owners.

This whole trail system was built on trust. I guess the best way I can explain it is how Club Echo started in my riding. When Club Echo first approached me, it was a man by the name of Leon Gravel, and may Leon rest in peace. The only reason that Club Echo got access to my land is because I knew and I trusted Leon. He was a fellow dairy farmer. He said, "We want to make this trail. We're going to mark it off. We're going to do all these things. If somebody goes off the trail, we'll make sure that doesn't happen again. We're going to put gates where we break through your fences. We're going to make sure the fences are better than they were before." And they did all those things.

We gave permission because we trusted Leon. Part of that—anyone who gave permission to Club Echo got an Echo pass. That was a little piece of paper, and if you happened to have a snowmobile, you had the right to go on Club Echo's trails. For those of you at home, I believe it was to Englehart and halfway to New Liskeard. That was lots for me. I didn't want to go any farther. I couldn't make it any farther. But that's how it started, and Club Echo ran very well. Then Club Echo went together with the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. Good move, but we didn't have any relationship with the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. All the property owners got a nice letter in the mail: "Club Echo is now part of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. Thank you for letting us cross your land, but if you want to get on the trail, you're now going to have to buy the \$250 pass; end of discussion." But they never asked us.

I was president of the Temiskaming Federation of Agriculture. A few farmers called me, and we said, "No, we never had a deal with OFSC." So we called OFSC up and we announced that we closed the trails.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That got their attention.

Mr. John Vanthof: It did get their attention. The folks from Barrie drove right up and were prepared to read us the riot act. It started with: "How dare you close our trails?" To which we replied—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's my land.

Mr. John Vanthof: "It's our land. You never asked for permission. We gave our permission to Club Echo; we never gave permission to you." All of a sudden the tone changed. We've developed a very good relationship with OFSC, based on—this was years ago—a mutual respect of whose land was whose.

That's why we hear the word "easement," and that's giving away power over your land. Farmers are not going to go for that. The fine print says "with or without covenant," and they read "lawyer." There's a real danger that farm groups led by younger radicals than me are going to pull their support. You can ask Bill Ramsay. He's as worried as I am that the trails will collapse because of this. I know that the farmer doesn't have to grant an easement, but it's just the idea that we're talking about—you need much clearer English on what the rights are and what they're not.

Further in this act, if the landowner does grant an easement, you read, "An easement may be assigned by an eligible body to another eligible body," which means that if you don't have something written right at the start, someone who you never had a relationship with could give the use of your land to someone else 10 years down the road. Farmers are happy having a snowmobile trail cross their land, but if it's an ATV trail, it's a whole different story, because then you're trampling over our crops. That's a whole different story.

1350

Someone's going to say, "Oh, John, that never happens." I'll give you another personal example of how this happened.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Was this when you were a young radical?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yup.

TransCanada PipeLines has an easement across my land, as it does with all kinds of other people in the Little Clay Belt. They put two pipes through. TransCanada PipeLines are great people to deal with. But then TransCanada PipeLines rented their easement to Bell Telephone, and Bell Telephone put a fibre optic cable in between the two pipes and cut the tiles. It was a nice little machine, a little plow. It only made a hole this big along the top, but everywhere where there was a tile, it cut them. They didn't fix them, and TransCanada PipeLines was in no mood to fix them because they didn't cause the problem, so that's the way it stayed. Whenever you fix a tile around a pipeline, you've got to get a pipeline guy there. You don't want a backhoe close to a pipeline, because bad things happen.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Boom.

Mr. John Vanthof: Boom.

The farmers paid to fix all those tiles, but we remembered.

Then TransCanada PipeLines came to put a third pipe in, and they needed to make the easement bigger. You ask anybody who has worked for TransCanada PipeLines about the negotiations that went on with the farmers of Timiskaming. They almost had to go around the bedrock because we remembered.

That's the case. When we signed the first easements, fibre optic cable didn't even exist.

So, again, when farmers read this, they get nervous. You've got to remember: The property owners are the stakeholders in this. They have nothing to gain but everything to lose. There is absolutely nothing to gain,

and they're not asking for anything to be gained. They don't gain personally from the trails. They want to help the community by having the trails. But when they see easements and covenants and "Perhaps you should call your lawyer," they're going to say, "Why bother? Why go through this bother? I'm just going to close the trail."

It doesn't take a lot. It takes a few in certain spots, and the trail system could collapse. That would be a huge, huge shame.

I urge the minister—and I had a good discussion with the minister, by the way. I walked across and he understood exactly. He understood completely what the issue was. I commend him for that. He understands; we understand; hopefully the people watching this understand. So how do we proceed?

We're willing—I'm certainly willing, and I believe my colleagues are—to support this in second reading, but there have to be amendments made before and if this law passes. The amendments have to make—actually, the legislation doesn't really need that many changes. The purpose of the legislation has to be spelled out within the legislation, because the legislation leaves lots of room for interpretation by folks like the Ontario Landowners. The minister put out a couple of press releases stating what the government's intention was, and the press releases were good. But the press release—basically, that should be in the documentation. It should be in the bill. That way, when OFSC or someone comes to use your property and they say, "No, you don't have to sign the easement. Here's what we would like you to do and here are your options," it should be laid out in plain, plain English. As soon as you have to start saying—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: "Get a lawyer."

Mr. John Vanthof: "Get a lawyer," or "The minister promised," or "We're the government. We're here to help"—as soon as you hear things like that in rural Ontario, the odds are not good.

That's got to be done within the text of the bill, for OFSC's sake, too, so when they come—because they're going to have to come and ask for my permission. If they are going to need an easement someplace, at least they can lay out in the bill, "Here's what we want to do."

They have to clarify this part about how one body can transfer the easement to another body. That's just a non-starter. That is just a non-starter, because there's no way that I'm going to tell a farmer that that's a good idea. That has got to be changed.

Something else that we rail about a lot in this House and on this bill—it's a prerogative. This is a bill that has to travel to places where they actually have these trails.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, downtown Toronto; like Queen's Park?

Mr. John Vanthof: No. Well, they can talk about it, but stakeholder groups in downtown Toronto are not the people who are going to make the trails fail. It's John Vanthof and people like me in the back roads of Ontario who have lots of better things to do with their time and who are doing this as a public service. That's really important. I would implore the government, when and if

this passes second reading, that you take the time, that we all take the time to do this one right for rural Ontario, so that the snowmobile industry and all of the other people who use trails throughout the province—I'm concentrating on snowmobiles; they're a big thing in my part of the world—so it actually continues to flourish and grow.

If this bill is explained correctly, there are good things, even about the easements, like the bridge thing I told you about. But if the government does its usual thing and time-allocates this bill and holds a few hearings in Toronto, farmers and property owners across the province are, one by one—and sometimes in groups—going to withdraw the right to use their land, because they won't see themselves in this bill. As much of rural Ontario doesn't see itself reflected in a lot of government regulation, it doesn't see itself reflected here.

It wouldn't take big changes. It won't take a wholesale overhaul. It will take respect for rural Ontario. Then we can actually use this, make it a really good piece of legislation and make it a big step forward for the snowmobile clubs, for the property owners and for the hundreds of restaurants, motels and hotels that depend on snowmobiling and other such sports in the province. We can do this right. I implore the government to do this right.

If for some reason the government stops and the agenda falls and starts anew, you'll be better off letting this bill die on the order paper than ramming it through. You're better off to do it right than ram this one through. This isn't an earth-shattering bill, but believe me—and I know from personal experience. When I was president of the federation of agriculture and we closed the trails in Timiskaming–Cochrane for that week, it was pretty earth-shattering for a lot of those hotels and restaurants. But now, I don't just represent farmers; I represent those hotels and those restaurants and all those people and the Ski-Doo dealers and the gas stations. Ski-Doos have gotten a lot better. They're much more economical than they used to be, but they still do use a bit of gas.

I represent all of those people and I want this sector to flourish and I want this province to flourish. I implore the government, do this one right. Let it pass second reading. Hold legitimate committee hearings throughout the province. Let's all work together to come up with legitimate, good amendments that will make this bill better and stronger and make it represent everyone in the province. Let's all work together on this one. We have the capability to make this good. The minister understands; I know he understands. Let's hope that his government does, because if his government doesn't understand what's happening here or what could happen, snowmobile trails in lots of parts of the province will close. And it will be on their heads.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. I want to thank the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for some excellent points, and certainly points made out

of a breadth of personal experience with these issues. I'm sure everybody on our side of the House values very highly those opinions that were expressed, some very good points.

Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to further open up some of the most spectacular areas of this province for people to enjoy, to experience—and also to provide economic opportunity for many other parts of this province that would desperately benefit from the increase in tourism that more trails in Ontario will create.

1400

I'm also particularly excited about the fact that this bill also speaks to water trails, something that hasn't really been that well known in Ontario to date as a formal type of trail. I think that's a very interesting aspect of this bill.

Certainly, what the member opposite mentioned about the issue of easements and different mechanisms to ensure access to privately owned land and other lands—I think it's important to note that this bill lays out different options for how access to these lands could be secured. Easements are one option, and if it requires further explanation of how that would work, that's certainly something that I would encourage, that we need to do.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we want Ontarians and people from around the world to experience the beauty of our province, and there's no better way to do it than by exploring it through the various trails and waterways around all of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to comment on Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, and on the speech from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I agree with his main ask, which was that the purpose of the bill should be stated within the bill. He was talking about the possible effects on snowmobile trails. I'm seeing that in Parry Sound–Muskoka, which also has some wonderful snowmobiling trails around the area.

In fact, I want to get on the record a letter from the Snowcrest Riders president, Bob Clarke. He wrote to me and said, "I felt it very important that I inform you that Snowcrest Riders Snowmobile Club in Gravenhurst will have trail closures as of April 1, 2016. One trail closure affects our Top D trail south that features the bridge that crosses all four lanes of Highway 11, and our Beaver Creek bridge that was opened in February 2010. Combined, these bridges cost \$1.4 million, and were largely funded by provincial and federal dollars...."

"Mr. Miller, the landowners I have talked to want section 12 of proposed Bill 100 to be amended to include the simple wording below that Minister Michael Coteau has already stated.

"'An easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agreed to do so.'

"Add the above statement from the minister to section 12 of Bill 100, and we may address the concerns of the landowner."

He goes on to ask why there needs to be an easements section at all when it's already dealt with in other ways.

I share his concern. I think this is essentially what the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane was asking for: that the purpose of the bill be stated right in the bill, to put some of the landowners' concerns at ease, because these trails that are in Timiskaming-Cochrane and Parry Sound-Muskoka are so important for the folks who live there, for tourism, for people who enjoy outdoor activities. I very much support what Mr. Clarke from the Snowcrest Riders is asking for in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to make comments after the 20 minutes that we just heard from my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who was commenting on Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 and to amend various Acts.

I always find it interesting to hear from our colleagues around the Legislature and to learn some new things. Today, I learned that snowmobiling and ATVs are two very different things.

Normally, I stand up and I bring voice on behalf of my constituents in Oshawa. But I've lived in a few places, Mr. Speaker, and one of them was in the little town of Palgrave, off Highway 50. As children, we took full advantage of the former train tracks and the trail system and had a wonderful time along there. We appreciated being able to cross-country ski, go off-trailing or off-roading on property that belonged to a tree farm, and that they were glad to offer that land for public use and for the community to appreciate in the winter. That was part of growing up. I can only imagine, if some of our trails and our trust systems—if we see boundaries spring up so that people can't take not just full advantage, but fully appreciate these spaces.

To the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane's point that this is the beginning of what needs to be a fulsome conversation—to not just travel the province, but maybe travel the trails and have the conversations with those who don't have things to gain but recognize how they fit in with community appreciation of the land.

Over the intercession, I drove around the riding with the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, and there was so much to see just from the car window. It would be a shame to miss it from the back roads perspective.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It does give me great pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 100. It's something that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has been working on since 2005. It has been, I can assure the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane—and thank you very much, by the way, for your wonderful words and your commitment to your riding and trails in general. I wanted to also say that it has been a process that has involved 11 ministries.

There has been quite a bit of conversation about this new strategy.

The other thing that I wanted to address quickly is that this act, if passed, would be an agreement between a willing landowner and an eligible body that grants the eligible body access to the owner's land for trail-related activities or purposes. The easements would have to be negotiated between willing landowners and these eligible bodies, and be registered on the title of the land. I hope that does rest the member opposite assured that nobody is going to be coerced into granting easement.

With respect to consultation, we have done consultations with people from Thunder Bay to Toronto, Ingersoll to Ottawa, and received very positive and valuable advice. We have received feedback from an Environmental Registry posting, engagement with aboriginal groups and five regional sessions across the province.

I know I don't need to spend a lot of time—I would like to, but I can't—on the wonderful benefits of the use of our beautiful trails that we have. I have many in the area surrounding Kingston and the Islands. I use them often, and I'm very excited about supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane for his reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the members from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Oshawa and Kingston and the Islands. I'd like to thank them for their thoughtful comments, because we appreciate that.

One thing that the member from Kingston and the Islands said was, "We've been talking with 11 ministries." But you've got thousands of landowners—property owners—that you need to talk to because, once again, they have no need to negotiate. As soon as they have to hire a lawyer to negotiate, they're going to say no. Why? Why would I? Why would they?

You've got the government with lawyers, you've got the eligible bodies and the other eligible bodies that may be coming down the road who will have representation. Then the property owners are supposed to—well, you know, "You should maybe get a lawyer." As soon as that's said, it will be deal off—and rightfully so. It should be written in very plain English, so you don't need to get a lawyer to even think about it.

I understand this legislation, hopefully, and I'm sure the members opposite understand it, but that doesn't mean that every landowner or every property owner is going to take the time and take this to a lawyer for \$500 or \$1,000. They're going to say, "No, thank you." That's the point I'm trying to get across.

A consultation process: We're going to need it to make sure that everybody really understands, because it won't take a thousand people to take away the right to cross; it will take 10 in the right places. I know; I've done it. It will take 10 in the right places. That's why I'm so passionate about this, because I know it's possible, because we've done it before. At that time, it was used as a negotiating tactic. This time, it could be the failure of the sector, and I certainly don't want to see that.

1410

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to represent my great riding of Newmarket–Aurora—which is very passionate about its trails—and the government by starting off the debate on Bill 100, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. Just for the record, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Kitchener Centre and the member for Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start the debate this afternoon by saying how proud I am to be part of one of the strongest and most cohesive governments in Ontario's history, a cohesive government that promised in our 2014 platform to support the expansion of Ontario's trail network, and a cohesive government that has taken coordinated steps to achieve that objective.

As we're all well aware, the Ministry of Transportation has been encouraging environmentally friendly, active forms of transport through its #CycleON strategy. By improving cycling infrastructure by making our highways and streets safer, the Ministry of Transportation is supporting the expansion of our trail network and encouraging a culture of wellness in Ontario. As part of the #CycleON strategy, I was pleased to announce just a few weeks ago that the town of Newmarket—part of my riding—is receiving \$325,000 in funding towards the construction of a new, five-kilometre bike lane.

I just wanted to take a few minutes to talk about my experience, because I have experience with two different types of jurisdictions. I live in an urban area, a residential area of Aurora. I was a town councillor there for a number of years. Aurora has some of the most beautiful off-road trails that you can find, that meander through the Oak Ridges moraine. I walked those trails with my children for many years, Mr. Speaker, and took my dog there for walks. What I learned through the advocacy of phenomenal people like Klaus Wehrenberg, who lives in Aurora and is a real urban active-transportation advocate, is that there's a difference between a recreational trail and an active-transportation trail. I hadn't realized until I became a town councillor that with good urban planning, we can put in place trails that lead from a child's house to the school that lessen the need for them to walk along a busy, smelly, dangerous street, and that businesspeople, when they are leaving the St. John's Sideroad to the north end of Aurora, can walk through the beautiful Aurora arboretum in a beautiful trail setting down to the GO station on Wellington. I'm constantly amazed at the number of people who do that sort of thing, who move from point A to point B on business or shopping or school using off-road trail systems.

So not all trails are recreational. There are many trails in urban settings that get us from point A to point B, and it's exceptionally important that those who are involved with urban planning make sure we put those plans in place.

This year, we saw the Pan/Parapan Am secretariat also taking steps to fulfill the promise to Ontarians. Those

games inspired us to lead more active lives and then went a step further, leaving Ontario with an amazing legacy in the Pan Am trail: over \$3.5 million invested to fill in over 250 kilometres of gap in our trails network.

Of course, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport is leading the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act with support from the Attorney General, who is overseeing the modifications to the Occupiers' Liability Act, and Natural Resources and Forestry, who oversee changes to the Public Lands Act—five different groups overseen by four different ministers, all working in tandem to achieve one purpose, a purpose created and driven by stakeholders.

This is a grassroots piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. We engaged over 250 stakeholders to develop Bill 100, and before the opposition asks: Yes, of course, we consulted numerous property owners. We held regional consultation sessions not only in Toronto; we held them in Thunder Bay, in Ingersoll, in North Bay, and in Ottawa. Our government held in-person conversations with aboriginal groups, 80 municipalities, health organizations, tourism organizations, academics and farmers, and of course, Mr. Speaker, with our trail organizations.

After that, we posted Bill 100 on the Environmental Registry, where it was open to public comment for 48 days. We took each of the 80 online comments to heart, Mr. Speaker. They were reviewed by senior policy staff and lawyers from four separate ministries.

I know in their leadoff speech the opposition claimed that we didn't consult on Bill 100. I can say, Mr. Speaker, that that simply isn't true. The record bears this out.

The bill has been in development since 2013. And while our government has taken great care to understand what the sector wants and needs, to balance the desires of diverse stakeholder groups, I got the impression from the PC leadoff speech that they listened to one stakeholder, and just one stakeholder.

As we start debate, I think it's important to remind everyone that Bill 100 is an enabling piece of legislation. What I mean by that is that Bill 100, if passed, would provide landowners with additional options and additional tools for establishing land arrangements. Landowners will have the option to continue to use existing arrangements if that's what they want to do.

When we were doing our broad consultations, we heard from landowners who said that the current system was working for them, and farmers who said they wouldn't use a trail easement because each year they rotate which section of their land they allow local snowmobile clubs to use. We talked with landowners who wanted a way to carry on their generosity into perpetuity by registering an easement on title. We spoke with trail organizations who had invested large quantities of money in building bridges for trail users and wanted some assurance that they would be able to continue to use the infrastructure they had paid for.

You see, Mr. Speaker, this option isn't for everyone, and was never intended to be used by everyone. That is why Bill 100 would create an additional voluntary sys-

tem to establish trail easements that individuals may or may not choose to use.

As we continue to debate, I know that our members will continue to highlight what Bill 100 will do, if passed, and we will continue to debunk the misconceptions that some members of the opposition seem adamant in articulating during their speaking turns.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the continued debate on the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, and would call on all members of this House to support both Bill 100 and Ontario's amazing trail network.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to join the debate this afternoon in the House to speak about Bill 100, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. Trails in Ontario are one way that we can connect with our heritage while enjoying the great outdoors and staying physically fit.

I'd like to share some insights with you, Mr. Speaker, if I could, on trails in my community of Kitchener and Waterloo region. On a warm day, you can find cyclists, rollerbladers and walkers all actively using the Walter Bean trail. I see you smiling there, so you're obviously familiar with this trail. It's a very favourite place for my family, and we've enjoyed it for many years, as have many people in Kitchener Centre. At 11 kilometres long, the Walter Bean trail runs along the banks of the Grand River and connects to Schneider Park. In addition to being very scenic, the trail features highlights of our great Canadian heritage. Throughout the trail, there are displays that remind trail users of the indigenous populations that lived along the banks of the Grand River. When it's completed, the trail is going to run 76 kilometres, connecting Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and Woolwich.

Our government recognizes that trails are a fantastic way to showcase our unique Canadian culture, and to champion the social and economic benefits of active living. That's why I was very excited two weeks ago when the Premier announced \$975,000 over two years for the region of Waterloo to build additional cycling and walking trails. We made this announcement inside a small bike shop in Cambridge. We were joined by some of our municipal partners, and they were very excited by this announcement. They're looking forward to the funding flowing so that they can get started with the construction of these trails.

1420

I'm looking forward to new and accessible paths connecting my communities' two universities. I look forward to a wider path along the Courtland Avenue area in Kitchener to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians. This is just down the street from where my constituency office is, and once all the snow melts, I look forward to riding my bicycle to work during constituency weeks.

Each and every time our government invests in trail infrastructure, we do renew our commitment to cultivating a culture of wellness and recreation in Ontario. It's

because of our commitment to that culture of wellness that we've brought forward this particular act.

We've already heard members speaking in support of the economic benefits of trails, but I would like to address some concerns raised by some opposition members regarding Bill 100, specifically regarding how it impacts landowners and trail organizations. It's important to offer some clarity on what's called duty of care that falls to trail users by landowners and how that's going to result in a lower level of liability.

Currently in the province, there are two standards of care as described in Ontario's Occupiers' Liability Act. One level, the higher level, requires that an owner protect a person entering his or her property against all reasonable, foreseeable circumstances. If you're a grocery store owner, for instance, that means taking care in case there is a spill: You get a mop and you mop it up. You want to make sure that your customers don't slip and injure themselves, and you face a lawsuit.

If you're a landowner who is volunteering his or her land to a trail organization, a higher level of care would mean that you'd have to fix the potholes and clear fallen trees in a very timely manner. But if you are willingly volunteering your land for the enjoyment of others, holding you to that level of care seems rather onerous. It's a level of care to which we do not intend to hold owners of trails. Unfortunately, when trail users pay minimal fees for something unrelated to the use of a trail—say, for instance, parking—it becomes very ambiguous as to what standard of care a landowner owes to a trail user. If it's passed, Bill 100 is going to clarify that. It's going to make it clear that only the lower standard of care is owed to the trail user.

By transferring the responsibility from landowners to trail users, our government does a number of things. First, we're going to further protect landowners, and by protecting landowners, it's our belief that it's going to increase access to trails by removing one of the barriers that discourages landowners from volunteering their land. Secondly, by clarifying what standard of care is required, we can help ensure that organizations pay insurance based only on that lower level of care. Sometimes, volunteer trail organizations may indemnify landowners in an effort to cultivate relationships. I'm glad that our government is helping to promote owners to look at the lower-level costs for our volunteering organizations by outlining language within the Occupiers' Liability Act.

I'm encouraged by what our government is doing to remove red tape and to protect both our generous landowners and our active volunteers.

I would call on all members to familiarize themselves with Bill 100 and to support this very important and beneficial piece of legislation, such as members have already done—who are with Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who is sitting across from me there. He has said that he supports this. I've had the opportunity to go along some trails in Bruce county, and they're absolutely love-ly.

Once members read the bill for themselves, I am certain that they will see that there is great merit in Bill 100.

Mr. Speaker, if you are ever in the Kitchener-Waterloo area any time soon, I encourage you to check out the Walter Bean trail. It's magnificent. It's remarkable that it exists in the heart of a growing urban area.

This is an important bill, and I encourage all members of this House to voice their support in favour of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ajax-Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm very happy to be here to stand in front of you today to speak to Bill 100, Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. Ontario has the largest, if not the second-largest, network of trails in Canada. It's a contest between Ontario and Quebec. With over 80,000 kilometres of trails, we enjoy here in Ontario some of Canada's most iconic trails, trails that we share with millions of visitors from outside the province each and every year.

We have already heard that trail tourism supports over 18,000 jobs across the province and annually contributes over \$1.4 billion to our GDP. We've already heard that Ontario has invested over \$130 million to support our trail network since 2009, investments and supports which includes the Waterfront Trail, which runs all the way through my riding, from Cliffview Park next to Petticoat Creek Conservation Area, around Frenchman's Bay to the Ajax waterfront park. For me, it's kind of a very special time because I've had the honour of being the longest-serving waterfront chair in those communities. We have just continued to grow. Trails and waterfronts go hand in hand. They're just a natural fit and they both draw more people each and every year.

I want to take a moment to speak to a different benefit. I want to speak to the health benefits associated with trail use. They support healthy, active lifestyles through exercise, promote social interaction, and encourage active transportation like walking and cycling, as the doctor sitting in front of me reminded me recently. It's well known that physical activity relieves stress and tension and can help prevent obesity, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and depression. Less known is that active trail use has been shown to enhance mental well-being and brain health throughout life. In fact, the 2014 Ontario trail survey found that respondents experienced significant personal benefits from using the trails, with 91% of those surveyed stating they experienced improvement in mental health and 90% indicating a better sense of well-being.

We've been active in expanding trails in Ontario and announced just under \$1 million for trails in the region of Kitchener last month, which was mentioned earlier. It never ceases and everyone in Ontario benefits, every visitor to Ontario benefits.

In reference to the Pan Am Games and all the trails, I can tell you that our Premier was out our way several times because there's hundreds of acres in what's called Greenwood park, which covers both Ajax and Pickering, and there were many hundreds of kilometres of trails completed during that time frame.

Research tells us that for each additional kilometre walked per day, there is a cumulative 4.8% reduction in the likelihood of obesity. The members of this House might find it interesting to learn that the medical benefits and costs saved as a result of the trails are almost three times greater than the cost of trail construction and maintenance.

We should mention, especially with the introduction of this legislation, that our government has acknowledged the importance of trails and their contribution to our culture, our communities, our economy and, most importantly, the well-being of Ontarians. If passed, Bill 100 will clarify the standard of care owed by landowners to trail users.

As a fellow snowmobiler, my friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane, I must go up and visit you.

Mr. John Vanthof: You're welcome any time, Joe.

Mr. Joe Dickson: And you can come down and visit me. I've done trail warden, I've done citations from the clubs. We do the maintenance in the early winter to clear the trails, and all of that. You know what? People keep forgetting that farmers use all those trails through the bushes, too, to run their equipment. It's all available to them. It's their land; we take care of it. A snowmobiler will tell you, and the world will tell you, that snowmobilers, whatever they take, they bring back with them. If it's a can of pop, they bring the can back; if it's a piece of paper, they bring it back. They will actually stop and pick up any debris along the way.

I also want to explain skiing. When you see a double black diamond, you instantly have an idea how challenging the slope can be. Currently, there is no system in place to help a trail user understand how difficult hiking a particular trail will be. That will come with a change. If Bill 100 is passed, this will address the concern with a number of others. The government, after consulting over 250 different stakeholder groups, has put together this amazing bill, and it's just the beginning.

I'm glad you spoke about snowmobilers, because I would be remiss if I didn't say that snowmobilers can't operate without the co-operation of landowners. Snowmobile owners—if they reference some 30,000 permits at an average of \$200 a permit, you would see that that's \$6 million that snowmobilers take care of themselves. They pay to operate the equipment. They pay the men and women who run the equipment. They pay for the grooming of trails. They pay for a lot of other things. But mostly, they provide a surveillance on property.

1430

As a warden, I can tell you that it's my right—give me five seconds—to go in and charge that person as a trespasser. We do that already, and this is expanded for the benefit of landowners.

I wish to thank the Speaker for being so generous with the time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: This bill is an unnecessary bill. We currently have a system of snowmobile trails in the

province of Ontario that works very well. It has been carried on for 40 or 50 years. It is a voluntary arrangement between property owners—often farmers—and the local snowmobile associations. Over the years, a very respectful and co-operative arrangement has been developed between the two groups. It's well established now that snowmobilers are a responsible, respectful group of people who cause farmers no problems. There's no litter, no damage; no problems whatsoever. As a consequence, the farmers have grown to trust these organizations, to trust the snowmobilers to be good citizens and to be responsible.

It's a respectful arrangement both ways. Landowners respect that snowmobilers would like to have trails across the province of Ontario. As the landowners co-operate, these trails are there for them. That is the system we have now. It works very well, and it has worked very well for a long time. There is no problem, so why do we need a bill? If there's nothing to fix and everything is working well, the government doesn't need to be here. We have private groups of snowmobilers and property owners who respectfully get along and have happy arrangements where everybody gets what they want.

If the bill doesn't do anything for anybody—and it doesn't do anything for anybody—why do we need it? I think this is a piece of legislation that I would truly call red tape that we do not need and does no good.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It was a pleasure to listen to the members from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Kitchener-Waterloo and Ajax–Pickering. I would like to say that I agree with many of the things that they said. Specifically, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo was talking about the Occupiers' Liability Act. Those are moves in the right direction. I, as a property owner, have no problem with that. That's a step in the right direction.

Where we still run into problems—and I'm going to read the parts: "An owner of land may grant an easement, with or without covenants, to one or more eligible bodies." That has to be explained in layman's terms to the laypeople who actually own the property.

When you get to subsection 12(8), "An easement may be assigned by an eligible body to another eligible body, but the assignment must be in writing and must be registered on title to the land," that is a huge problem. If a snowmobile club wants to build a bridge on my property and they want an easement to it, I could live with that. But 15 years from now, if they give that easement to an ATV club just because we forgot to put it in the covenant in the first place because I couldn't afford a lawyer, right there you're going to say, "Forget it. We're not going ahead." So that needs to be clarified.

If you go a little bit further, there is a protection for owners. "The owner of land may enforce against the eligible body any covenants contained in an easement that is registered on title to the land," provided he goes to court and gets a lawyer. Why should he bother? Again, those have to be fleshed out.

There are very good parts in this bill, but there are parts that are going to make landowners very nervous. We have a good relationship with snowmobilers. We want to keep it that way. We need to fix those parts of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Again, I would like to acknowledge all of my colleagues in the House who have spoken to this bill, particularly the member from Newmarket–Aurora, who made a reference to this piece of legislation as being a real grassroots piece of legislation. I have to say that I agree. There has been an awful lot of collaboration. There have been trail associations who have been working very hard on this bill since 2005. They've put a lot of time and energy into it. They were here at Queen's Park when the bill was first introduced.

I would also like to acknowledge the member from Kitchener Centre. She brought forward comments regarding the indigenous recognition. This is extremely important, and we need to be conscious of this in all areas of legislation and in every single ministry. She also made a reference to the social and economic benefits, a culture of wellness, and also the Occupiers' Liability Act. These are all very important aspects of this bill.

The member from Ajax–Pickering also made reference to the economic benefits and said something that was very important that related to black diamonds on ski runs. What happens when you enter a trail and you've got some kids in tow with you? You need to be sure that you can manage the trail. This piece of legislation will lay out that strategy.

So I wouldn't really call this an unnecessary piece of legislation. I think it's very necessary. In every area that we work with and every piece of legislation that we bring forward, it's very important to consider the safety of our citizens. We need to make sure that those classifications are done properly, and I thank all of my colleagues for bringing their voices forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I rise to offer my comments to the members opposite speaking about Bill 100.

If they have consulted with all the groups they say they have consulted with, why am I getting phone calls into my office from snowmobile clubs and property owners with concerns about this bill? Why is that happening? I don't think the consultation went on as they thought it had. I certainly wasn't there. I wish I was there when they were consulting these people, because then we would have a better understanding of what was going on.

This bill needs clarity. That should have been done first, and then we wouldn't run into problems with explaining bills to our constituents.

If a government is going to introduce any kind of legislation, they should think about what the ramifications are down the road. I don't think they've done that here at all. In fact, even last week I've been talking to property owners in my area, trying to explain to them the

differences in the bill and what they're concerned about. If that had been done in the first place, we wouldn't even be having this debate here today.

We're a very trusting society in rural Ontario, until that trust is broken. Then we get very suspicious of anything else that's coming down the line. The Green Energy Act is a perfect example of that. What this government has done to rural Ontario with the Green Energy Act, and certainly what they did with the horse racing business—now they're asking us to trust them that this bill is going to benefit everybody? It probably could have, if it had been explained in the first place what was going on here. But we in rural Ontario get very concerned when we have to start hiring lawyers and whoever else to help us understand a bill, and that's when our suspicions start to rise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time that we have for questions and comments for this round. One of the government members can reply.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm pleased to respond to comments made by my colleagues, MPPs representing Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Kingston and the Islands, and Perth–Wellington—a lot of very good comments.

I will say that at the outset, when I kicked off debate, I mentioned the fact that I live currently in a more urban area with a lot of trails, a lot of kilometres of trails, but I also own some property in the north end of the Muskokas and have ridden snowmobiles from Dorset up to North Bay and back, and I know the snowmobile trail system there extensively. I know how important that trail system is to local realtors, gas stations and cafes along the way. I know that, for many of them, without that type of income from snowmobilers during the winter months, they simply couldn't exist. It's very important to tourism in that part of Ontario and, of course, across Ontario.

1440

I wanted to address the comments by the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills because the reason this bill, Bill 100, is before us is very simple: Stakeholders asked us for it. We heard from property owners, from municipalities, from trail clubs—we heard from these organizations that said, "There need to be some changes." That's why we responded with Bill 100.

Mr. Speaker, we talked to landowners who wanted a way to carry on their generosity into perpetuity, as I said before, by registering an easement on title. We spoke with trail organizations who had invested large quantities of money—in the millions—in building bridges for trail users and wanted some assurance that they would be able to continue to use the infrastructure that they had paid for.

This bill has been widely consulted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2015

and to amend various Acts. It's also known as the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015. This bill has been brought forward. It changes quite a number of pieces of legislation. When you end up changing plenty of legislation, it's very important to make sure that we've had a close look at the implications of the changes going forward and that Ontarians understand the bill before it reaches final passage and moves into regulation.

Our party has talked to numerous members here of the importance of trails and the importance of preserving and promoting Ontario's trail infrastructure. Quite a bit of the economy in rural Ontario can be derived from usage of these trails and having access to these trails. We wanted to make sure, with this bill coming forward, that there was enough consultation that was listened to. You hear the government say that they have consulted and they were asked to come forward with it, but I couldn't tell you the number of calls that members on this side of the House are receiving with concerns about this bill, which leads to the question: How great was this consultation process, then?

This government has a history of saying they consulted but doing the opposite. We only have to look at this past budget, where the finance committee of the House toured the province and was in the midst of writing a report, and the budget was already printed and ready to be reported. Or we can talk today of, in the budget, the government coming forward about changing the deductibles for seniors' drugs, raising it up to \$130 a year and adding an extra \$1 copayment. Today they announced, "We're going to put that on pause." That just leads me to believe that they didn't consult on that.

With the history of the lack of consultation or the smokescreen—the smoke and mirrors, I guess you could say—of saying they have consulted, it raises flags on this side of the House. We want to bring these concerns forward during this second reading debate. We're hoping the government takes a second look at this bill and reaches out to those groups that have concerns before going forward, because there are serious concerns that property owners were not properly consulted when this bill came forward, nor were some clubs throughout the province.

As I said earlier, Ontario has numerous trails, and they are a huge draw for outdoor activities. We need to ensure that not only are there proper protections in place but at the same time we need to promote our local trails. We do support the intent of Bill 100 to promote trail preservation and increased awareness but, again, referring back to the consultation processes that we on this side of the House have concerns about. We would like to see that fixed going forward.

As a result of these poor consultations, my office is getting calls from property owners who have trails on their properties. I have had a municipality call my office inquiring what's going on with Bill 100. Unfortunately, what I'm hearing from municipalities, I'm also hearing from private landowners: that access is being cancelled to the trails. When you shut down the trails, you're not

helping local rural economies, you're not helping the promotion of trails. What you're doing is actually damaging the various aspects that make Ontario beautiful, and that's a concern here.

You would think that if we had started properly and had proper consultations, besides the three locations the members have stated—I don't think they went to Owen Sound. I'm pretty sure that Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has tremendous amounts of trails that I think would have been a great place to sit down and talk.

I don't know if they reached out to northern Ontario or not either. I realize that with this government northern Ontario is Barrie to them. But, in fact, it goes far, far north. I think reaching out and talking to us—Ingersoll is a great place; that's the member from Oxford's locale and it probably could take in some of the surrounding areas.

Toronto: I guess you could include Toronto. It's going to be where the committee hearings are going to be held.

But the fact is that you've missed some key areas of this province with regard to input into Bill 100, and I think that's something we need to ensure happens, so that the future access to Ontario trails isn't put at risk due to Bill 100.

I don't know why the government doesn't sit back and pull the bill back and have real consultations. This bill has sat on the order paper since May of last year. We're almost at the one-year anniversary since they introduced the bill. It wasn't a priority to push it through and get it done because it just sat. We're actually starting to debate it now almost a year after it was introduced.

So for the urgency of this government, why not pull it back? There's enough out roar from the rural communities of this province to take another look at this bill. Take the time. You've waited a year. If the trails are still operating without this bill—although some have shut down because of the fear of this bill—why not take it back and have a proper consultation? Go to northern Ontario. Go to Owen Sound. Take your time. We'd help you with this consultation process. We would be part of it and help draw out the people to talk about the problems with this bill.

So we request that the government delay this bill. Hold back. Let's have some more public consultations and ensure that we get it right. Because if we look back to Bill 45, we're dealing with Bill 178 right now because they rushed through a bill. They didn't do proper consultation and now they're going, "Oops, we need to do another bill to fix Bill 45." As I said before, why do you have to deal with that? You missed putting that part of the legislation of Bill 178 into Bill 45. We saw that in, I guess it was, December when they had to backpedal with regard to medical marijuana and come out with this bill to kind of fix things.

So why not step back and fix this trails act? There are 2,500 trails in Ontario; 80,000 kilometres of land; and, from what I've read, almost \$2 billion of economic activity each year is generated. Snowmobiling alone generates \$853 million—and that's for the 2013-14 calendar year—

and created roughly 11,307 jobs, according to the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs.

They're not only important for the economic activity, but Ontario trails also support active lifestyles and improve health and well-being. It's great to be in the outdoors and enjoying the trails. It's a great family event. You can take your kids out and you can take your wife out—speaking from my side of things—and enjoy what nature has to offer in our areas. My wife usually makes me go for walks to try to keep in shape and alive, I guess, further down the road, but sometimes we like to go off into the ravine behind our house and just walk through what nature has to offer. We have many opportunities throughout my riding to do so. Maintaining and enjoying Ontario's trails is a great way to learn about the environment and stay healthy, and the offshoot is a stronger economy for Ontario.

1450

So what does the bill do? Schedule 1 of Bill 100 establishes a process for property owners to grant easements to one or more eligible bodies. Then that body would register the easement. One issue that raises up is that the easement may be assigned or transferred by one eligible body to another one without the consent of the landowner. That's a concern that has been flagged quite a bit from conversations I have had. Original restrictions on use of the property would run with the land but the landowner could not restrict. One thing that's a concern is that once the easement is created, it can't be revoked. Although this act will design to preserve and entrench trails, when the property is sold the new owner cannot shut down that easement. That's a concern.

Schedule 5 of Bill 100 contains provisions to enhance protection of crown lands from damage and strengthen enforcement. A section is added which states, "Any person who causes a prescribed type of damage to crown land or crown property ... is guilty of an offence." If that person is found guilty they're required to rehabilitate or repair the damaged land—in addition to a fine. I think that's an important part of the bill. Many of the trails in my riding—there are private landowners but there are a number of crown lands that do have the trails that we do enjoy.

Schedule 6 of Bill 100 is meant to increase the maximum fine for those convicted of trespassing to \$10,000. It eliminates the \$1,000 limit on compensation for damages a court may award upon a trespassing conviction. I think it's key to point out that the private member's bill of the member from Dufferin-Caledon, the Respecting Private Property Act, did just that. It raised the maximum fine. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture supported Bill 36, but they're disappointed with the government on the fact that these schedules do not go far enough to address the concerns relating to farm safety and bio-security relating to trespassing. Our farms are becoming more high-tech and trespassing is becoming a serious concern. It's not just with trails. If you talk to your local anglers and hunters, that's a great concern for landowners, to have trespassing occurring on their properties.

Last year—I have to give credit to the Aylmer district stakeholders—they coordinated a project with the OPP and came up with an educational program with posters, handouts and flyers, and distributed them throughout the riding to help decrease the incidents of trespassing. It did settle it down a bit. But when you start getting the landowners worried, the farmers worried that possible trespassing can affect their business, or in fact that they could actually lose oversight of their own land through these easements, you might see these trails shut down. We did see the threat of that and the shutdown. I had a trail in the northern part of my riding. He actually shut down his trail for the winter. There wasn't much snow anyway for the snowmobiles. He was so uncertain of what was going on, he just said, "Forget it. We're going to keep it shut down for this session."

The concerns that I have been worrying about, and many, many landowners in this province are worried about, is that eventually the government will force them into an easement. I know this legislation. It stated that it's a voluntary process. The government assured us it's a voluntary process. This government also said a year ago, with regard to wind turbine projects, that local municipalities would have a say in allowing wind turbines in their area. They were assured some of the autonomy that the Green Energy Act took from them. If you look in my riding, we've got Malahide township and Dutton Dunwich. Both had projects going forward for wind turbines. Malahide said, "Yes, let's have wind turbines." Dutton Dunwich said, "No, we don't want wind turbines." Government says, "Okay, we'll give them to Dutton Dunwich."

So the fact that this government says that municipalities are going to have a say of some sort, be a part of the process—their actions don't follow through. So when they say Bill 100 is going to be voluntary for landowners with regard to these easements, they don't have the credibility to back up what they're saying. Landowners, people in rural Ontario especially, do not trust this government's words with regard to that, Mr. Speaker. The fact that the easements can be transferred from one body to another causes quite a bit of worry with regard to landowners.

Our member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills has spoken a little bit with regard to this bill, and I'm sure we'll hear more from him, but he raises quite a few fair points when he questions why easements have made their way into this legislation to start with. Farmers didn't ask for them, snowmobile clubs didn't ask for them, and the easements didn't offer any benefit to either party, so why are easements necessary or even in this legislation, Mr. Speaker?

In my riding of Elgin, we have a number of clubs that I'd like to point out while we're talking about Bill 100: the Elgin Hiking Trail Club, which just celebrated its 40th anniversary last year; the Talbot Trail ATV Club; and the Elgin Trail Riders Snowmobile Club. It's interesting with the snowmobile club that we don't really usually have enough snow for good trails; you usually have to go up to—

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, a beautiful area.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: —the Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound area. They would really like to point out, too, that they wish they were part of the consultation process during this development.

Our own member from Leeds-Grenville wrote a great letter to the minister. He has been in contact with plenty of stakeholders and is just asking them to pull the bill back until they can do proper consultation and ensure that all property owners are part of the process.

As I mentioned earlier about the different clubs in my riding, there are numerous trails. I could list them all off, but I have enjoyed quite a number of them myself, walking along them or taking my daughter out, because they're mostly adjoined to a lot of the conservation areas.

But there are private trails in the area, and these are the ones we don't want to shut down. This bill is not going to shut down the crown lands, the conservation area lands; the problem is that this bill is going to shut down the private trails which usually connect these trails to one another and ensure that people have access to them.

Just to summarize: Many of the farmers in my riding have contacted my office. Many trail users have contacted my office. There is a lot of confusion with Bill 100. There is a lot of explanation needed with Bill 100. We don't think enough consultation was given to areas of Ontario which this directly affects, especially in the rural areas which depend on the economic activity of their trails. They don't have the diversity to draw on other areas.

So we're asking the government to take a second look at this legislation. They've waited a year. We're almost at the one-year anniversary since it was introduced. We can wait longer if they pull it back. We've got the summer coming up. Let's sit down and have some great consultation in those areas of the province.

At the very least—they'll probably push this bill through with their majority—when it reaches the committee level, let the committee outside of Toronto. You're not going to get people from northern Ontario coming down to speak to this bill. You're probably not going to get many people from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to come and talk about this bill. Let the committee travel to these areas and have a discussion on how to fix this bill. Answer the questions and bring those amendments forward.

Hopefully, when we get those amendments and bring them forward in committee, the members of the government side will listen to the opposition side and maybe adapt some of those amendments. I just sat in on Bill 119, and the government shot down every single amendment that both the third party and our party brought forward, and it was quite disappointing that that occurred.

So let the committee tour. Utilize the aspect in rural Ontario. Try not to make it so complicated a system that we have to get lawyers involved. For the majority of the private trails, it's a handshake and the honour system,

which we still have in this province of Ontario. We don't need to have the mountains of work and lawyers.

We're seeing it with our grain farmers with the neonics and the amount of paperwork that they're having to go through. They are throwing their arms up in the air, and they're going to get more paperwork for their trails, which are voluntary. They're going to say "Forget about it," and these trails are going to be shut down. That's going to be a tragedy for Ontario.

So I'm hoping they listen. I'm glad I had this opportunity to speak, and I'm looking forward to questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

1500

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to offer some thoughts on the comments that were given to us by the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London. His riding and my riding of London West are, in fact, joined by the beautiful Thames Valley trail system. It's a 115-kilometre trail that passes through amazing Carolinian forest. It is a wonderful asset. It's the jewel in the crown, quite frankly, of the London area's trail system.

In London, we recognize the benefit of having access to this kind of trail system because of the recreational opportunities that it provides for families and individuals who live in our city; the improved health outcomes that come along with access to trails and participating in these kinds of recreational activities; the tourism benefits of drawing people to the region to take advantage of the trail system; and, of course, the economic development benefits of being able to draw new workers to our community and keep them there because of the amenities that are available in our region.

So I'm very troubled by what is happening as Bill 100, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, moves forward. This is an example of those unintended consequences, when the government doesn't think through the implications of what it is proposing. As a result of all of the confusion and the concerns that have arisen because of Bill 100, we see sections of this treasured trail system that we have in Thames Valley being closed. One third of that trail system passes through private land, through farmland, and that trail system is now at risk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I just wanted to respond to a couple of the comments that have been made from the opposition parties. The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London made some wonderful comments about enjoying the trails in his riding, in particular with his wife because his wife wants him to stay around longer. I think that's a very good thing. I hope that happens, as well.

I want to talk about that a little bit more. The member from London West has also spoken about the wonderful benefits of the trails: the tourism benefits, the economic benefits and the improved health outcomes. She has really spoken very passionately about the trails in her area of London West. I did want to acknowledge that.

But there was also a reference made by the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London to wind turbines and the government listening. One of the reasons why we changed the legislation with respect to the siting of energy projects was exactly so that we had the mechanism in place to listen to communities. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has been listening to the trails communities and associations. Since 2005, we have been working with them and understanding some concerns that there are. We've attempted to remediate those concerns within this legislation.

If there is continued confusion about the bill, as has been stated, I hope that those constituents' inquiries would come forward to the ministry so that they can be addressed appropriately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London on such a wide dissertation on Bill 100.

We have three public trails in Sarnia–Lambton that I'm most familiar with. The Howard Watson trail, which is on the old railroad right-of-way, goes from Sarnia up to points near Camlachie—about 23 miles or so. There's talk of extending that further. It's unfortunate that over the years a number of these municipalities let the land go back—they should have kept them open, the old railroad rights-of-way, because now it's going to be very difficult to further extend these. They go across a lot of nice scenery and some nice territory.

We have a new trail, and that's from Wyoming to Reeces Corners. It's probably about three kilometres. A lot of municipal co-operation and local fundraising went into bringing that trail in. There's talk of extending that from Wyoming to Petrolia. I know I spoke with a gentleman the other day who has been involved with the trail group there, and they'd like to extend that. It will take a little bit of work and some co-operation. There are still a couple of railroad right-of-ways that are available; I was checking them out the other day. So that's something I'd like to work with the local community on.

The other trail that we have is in St. Clair township along the beautiful St. Clair River. The Bluewater Highway trail, they call it there; that's along the old Highway 40—very scenic. That has been developed in conjunction with St. Clair township, with volunteers and with a number of corporations that front the river that have offered land as well.

As the other member said, we should make sure we have extensive hearings, because this affects not just the north but other parts of Ontario as well.

I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's a good thing to be able to get a couple of minutes on Bill 100, the trails act, and to follow the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

There are just a couple of points I'd like to re-emphasize. I've stood in this House I don't know how many times and said that it's great to make laws and legislation in this House but we have to make sure it works out on the field. This is an example. The basis of good legislation is here. It's the duty of the government to work with the process to make this legislation actually work in the field, because if this legislation doesn't work in the field, it's going to have the opposite effect; it's actually going to close trails in a lot of the parts of the province.

Why that is is because the typical stakeholder who comes to government and is going to call the ministry has a vested interest, but a lot of the stakeholders in the trail system have no vested interest. They're doing it out of the goodness of their hearts. Most farmers have a trail going across their farm out of the goodness of their hearts. If they see a piece of legislation that has any type of risk that they don't understand, they're not going to call the ministry and talk about consultations; they're just not going to sign the current agreement. So they're going to stop trails across their farm because it's just not worth the risk, and that would be an incredible shame because we have a good system.

If this bill is done correctly, it could help the trail system, but with the record of this government, how many amendments from the opposing side have ever passed here? None. That's what we're so worried about, because if this bill passes the way it is, there is a good chance that some of those property owners will see what happened and say, "Look, my life isn't reflected in this bill, so OFSC, you know what? I'm just going to cancel the deal we have now because it's not worth the risk." That's what we have to avoid here, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London for his reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to those who made comments. The members from London West and Timiskaming–Cochrane are strong voices for your communities—and excellent points, which I'm hoping people are taking note of.

The member for Sarnia–Lambton: It's always great to hear his comments and about his trails. I'm surprised you didn't mention your liquid natural gas bill that has come forward.

To the member for Kingston and the Islands: Thank you for your comments.

We totally agree that trails are important in Ontario. We totally agree on their health benefits, their economic benefits, and their increase in tourism. That's why we're so strong in our opinion that we need proper consultation. We don't want a good thing broken. We don't want to have to have a makeup session. It's very important that they get it right, and we're hearing in our own ridings across the province that certain areas and groups were missed in the consultation process and they have fear of this bill.

We have a fear of this bill passing through second reading and having committee meetings in downtown

Toronto, and not reaching out to those areas that have fear of this bill. If this bill goes forward without any amendments, as the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane has noted, trails are going to be shut down, which is going to negatively affect rural Ontario.

Since it was brought up in questions and comments about how the government was listening to rural municipalities, and they made changes—they said they made changes to municipalities' say with regard to wind turbine projects. My riding is a living example of how they do the opposite of what they say. Dutton Dunwich said no; the government said yes. Malahide township said yes; the government said no. I don't know who they're listening to. They're not listening to rural Ontario, and that's a concern that extends to other bills that are going to affect rural Ontario, outside Toronto: the fact that they don't listen. They say one thing and do another, and that's got to change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm certainly pleased to spend the next 20 minutes talking on Bill 100, Supporting Ontario's Trails.

I've actually enjoyed the first part of the afternoon, listening to a lot of my colleagues talk about different parts of Ontario, whether it be in the north or London West, and all those concerns around the trails and some of the stuff around amendments and getting it right, and around snowmobiling.

I'm going to talk in my 20 minutes a lot about my riding, so I want everybody to sit back and enjoy. I'm sure you've all been to Niagara; you've all done the trails.

So I'm going to start by saying thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, it is a pleasure to rise in this House and talk about an important piece of legislation for my riding, Bill 100, Supporting Ontario's Trails.

Speaker, here in our province of Ontario, we have one of the most extensive trail systems in the entire world. With more than 2,500 individual trails stretching over 80,000 kilometres in our great province, it is clear that if you want to see the beauty this province has to offer, you need only put on a pair of shoes. That is a wonderful thing. It's a wonderful thing to be able to walk out your front door knowing that unless you've been walking for a very long time, there is always going to be more to see in the province of Ontario.

I want to start today by just briefly acknowledging all the hard work and the long hours that go into maintaining and protecting our trails. I know that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals and clubs out there who do tremendous work. As volunteers, as city employees or as regional workers, they're all out there all year, in any kind of weather, making sure that our trails are clear, usable, and safe. Without their incredible dedication, their hard work, and, in some cases, public resources, we

would not have such spectacular trails right across this province. So I want to just make sure to say thank you. Thank you for being out there keeping the trails clear and usable all year round.

Having our trails is about more than just seeing the sights. It's about keeping yourself healthy. One of my colleagues talked about that here today, and then one of my other colleagues said it's nice that his wife wants to keep him healthy as well. I didn't understand that, but she did say it. It's about promoting our province. It is about building our economy.

In Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, we have lots of seniors who come to my riding, quite frankly, to enjoy their retirement years. They come because my riding is beautiful, a quiet place to relax alongside some of the best craft brewers, like Silversmith, Oast House and the Niagara Brewing Co., and our wonderful VQA wineries.

I spend a lot of time in those communities listening to our seniors and learning from their experiences, and recently I started to hear some things that were troubling. I hear from seniors that their hydro bills are going up, that their food costs are going up, and now, based purely on a decision of this government, their drug and health costs are going up. To me, Mr. Speaker, that is not acceptable. They are the people who built our province and they deserve better from this government.

But in fairness, I also hear happier stories from the seniors of my riding when I speak with them. I get to hear about their grandkids' hiking trips into our provincial parks. I get to hear about how the dirt paths they remember from their childhoods have become full-fledged trails. I always get to hear about what they heard or saw the last time they went out for a walk. Speaker, the fact that they're able to get out on our trails for a walk is a great thing. It's a great thing for our seniors and, really, for everyone in this province because it helps them stay active.

We all know that the cost of health care in this province continues to rise. The more we can encourage everyone to get out and be active is better for everyone and certainly better for health costs in the province of Ontario. Prevention is one of the best methods we have when it comes to controlling health care costs. By encouraging people to stay active, whether that means hiking the trails in our provincial parks or going for an afternoon stroll along the Niagara River and the Niagara Parkway, we are helping our health care system, our communities and our residents to stay healthy.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that promoting and protecting our extensive network of trails in this province is beneficial for both our health care system and, especially, to the health of our constituents is just one of the reasons that the goal for this bill, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, is one that I and my caucus colleagues can stand behind—with some amendments.

Protecting, promoting and preserving our trails also has other benefits that I think we need to acknowledge. As I'm sure you all know—and many probably have

first-hand experience—my riding of Niagara Falls relies on tourism for a big chunk of our economy. People come to visit the craft brewers and the VQA wines that I mentioned, as well as many more. They come to Niagara Falls to see the Falls themselves or to visit one of our casinos. They don't take a lot of money home from those casinos when they come to the casinos; it creates jobs. They come to Niagara-on-the-Lake to see the performances at the Shaw Festival or to enjoy the fruits of our farms at the Peach Festival. They come to buy local—locally grown fruit, vegetables and wine. They come to Crystal Beach, which is in my riding, to enjoy the beachfront trails. They come to Fort Erie to watch the races, to visit the historic fort, and hopefully—and hopefully the Liberal Party is listening to this—someday they'll come to play the slots again at the Fort Erie Race Track.

In my riding there is a huge variety of activities you can participate in, depending on which community you're visiting. But, no matter where you go, there's one thing you can always do: You can go outside and you can walk along or ride along one of our beautiful trails. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, you can see the end of the Bruce Trail at Queenston Heights, which starts 10 ridings and 900 kilometres away as part of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, or you can walk out into the 45-hectare Woodend Conservation Area and admire the beauty of the forest. In Niagara Falls, you can walk six kilometres along the Niagara Parkway—or ride a bike or motorcycle; whatever you need—starting at the Niagara Gorge and making your way through the Botanical Gardens to the Floral Clock.

How many of you here have been to the Floral Clock? Anybody been to the Floral Clock in Niagara Falls? Is anybody listening to what I was saying?

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I've got one.

Have you been to the Floral Clock? Anybody on that side? You must have been—in Niagara Falls.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes, I've been there, actually.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. I'm glad. Yes, it's beautiful.

Or you could pick up that 56-kilometre section of that Trans Canada Trail link that starts at Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake and ends at Anger Street in Fort Erie. You can see how the trails take care of that whole riding.

1520

Finally, in Fort Erie, you can walk on the 16-kilometre Friendship Trail beside Lake Erie. Starting at the border of Port Colborne—which is in my colleague's riding—in the west, the trail runs along an abandoned rail track, through lush farmland, quiet villages, wetlands, and quiet residential areas until you make it out to historic Old Fort Erie. From there, you can head out to Ridgeway, where you can enjoy the history or the view. Both are certainly worth doing.

These trails are part of what makes my riding of Niagara Falls and the entire Niagara region so unique.

You can easily walk through the history of our great country while at the same time exploring the beautiful natural landscape that has been preserved here.

That uniqueness is important. It's a big part of why we, as a riding and as a community, have been so successful in the tourist industry. We can offer you a mix of entertainment, from casinos in Niagara Falls to world-class horse racing in Fort Erie—and I'll just say this—where we need more race days and the slots back, by the way. We can offer you history and natural beauty that makes, I truly believe, a combination that would be hard to match anywhere in the world.

Our trails and the sights on them attract thousands and thousands of visitors to my riding every year from all over the world. They come to spend their days walking along and enjoying the beauty of our community, and the province of Ontario, and they spend their evenings in our hotels and our restaurants, supporting our local economy and helping to maintain jobs in our riding. By protecting, preserving and expanding our network of trails in this province and by promoting their use, we'll help grow the number of tourists visiting every year, not only in my riding but right across the province.

More tourists means more money being spent in our communities. More money being spent in our communities means more jobs. More jobs in our communities means that the people who live there are better off.

I know, from talking to people in my riding, that good jobs are one of the top priorities for them. The more we can do to create jobs—good, stable, full-time jobs—in our province, the better. This is one of those things that we can do, so I support the goal of doing it. Clearly, supporting Ontario trails is a good thing for Niagara Falls, for Niagara region and, quite frankly, for the entire province of Ontario.

Unfortunately, I find myself once again in a very familiar position. Other people have said this already. In fact, it almost seems like every week that I stand up to speak in this House, we are discussing the same sort of problems with a government bill.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear: Supporting Ontario trails is an important and well-meaning goal. As I just outlined, the trails in my riding are a big part of the economy and our community, and I am positive that the same is true for many of you in the House today talking about your ridings. However, once again, I find myself looking at a bill that falls short in details.

When this bill was first debated for second reading, on February 18, we heard concerns from several different members from vastly different parts of the province—which is really interesting—from the southeast, compared to the northwest, about how this will affect their communities. We heard that rather than promoting, protecting and expanding our trail systems here in Ontario, this bill is actually causing trails to close down.

Mr. Speaker, that is a big problem. When the outcome of a bill in fact is the exact opposite of the stated goal of the bill, then something hasn't gone according to plan.

One of the issues that has been raised with respect to this bill is how it handles points where public trails cross into private farmland. According to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, nearly 20,000 kilometres of the 80,000 kilometres of trails in Ontario run through municipalities, including trails that run along farmland, and these are the points where they have concerns about trespassing on private property.

The OFL—the OFA; the OFL is a different organization. The OFA has expressed concerns both about the lack of enforcement of the current trespassing law and about the fact that low penalties currently do little to discourage trespassing. These concerns are very real, particularly in rural communities where snow machine trails often go across private farmland, and they need to be addressed in this bill, moving forward.

An area of concern for me, when I am reading through the bill, also relates to the interaction of trail users and private property. In my research, it became clear to me that current rules around liability of property owners need to be updated. As it currently stands, a trail user who is injured while crossing over private property would be entirely within their rights to pursue legal action against the owner of that property. That means that by simply opening up their farmland for people to cross over as part of the trail, these farm owners are putting themselves at risk.

One of the possible ways to address this concern is by limiting or eliminating the property owner's liability if someone were to trespass off the prescribed trail and get injured in the process. Now, I am not a lawyer, so I won't claim that this is the best or the only solution to this problem. But I can say, with absolute certainty, that if we want Ontario farmers to open up their land for people to cross as part of a trail, we need to do everything we can to ensure that those farm owners are protected, their land is protected and their crops are protected.

I know that this is an important piece of legislation, so I really do hope that the government is going to take these concerns of the OFA and the farmers of our province very seriously. I hope that they are going to go out into rural communities where this is going to have a big impact to talk one-on-one with farmers to address these real concerns. I hope that they are going to have meaningful, ongoing consultation with people that this will affect so that we can get it right the first time. Remember: The outcome of the bill needs to match the goal of the bill for it to be successful.

I am coming to the end my time, but I want to make sure that you all know about some of the people who support this, as well as those who have concerns with it. Just last week, I had a wonderful opportunity to welcome the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects to Niagara Falls for their 48th annual conference. The OALA was originally founded in 1968, and under the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects Act of 1984, has the responsibility for regulating professional standards, accreditation for the profession, maintaining and improving the examination process, and for approv-

ing educational and professional development standards in the industry.

The landscape architects that I had the chance to meet with were all wonderful people who care deeply about protecting and preserving our environment—our air, our water—and who understand the importance of our trail system in doing that. In fact, the keynote address of the conference was entitled “Great Lakes Waterfront Trail: 20-Year Celebration of Innovation and Partnership.” According to the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, some of Ontario’s finest landscape architects were among the founders of the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail in the early 1990s. This year, the trail is going to be celebrating its 21st anniversary, and I want to make sure you all know that it’s going to be a big celebration on April 26.

1530

I’ll stop there, because I see my time is up. Thank you very much; I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I am quite delighted to respond to the member opposite and add my support to the Supporting Ontario’s Trails Act—Bill 100, it seems to be called. Now, when I think about Bill 100, I think about some historic school board legislation, but the current Bill 100 is our trails act.

The member talked about the wonderful trail network in the Niagara area, and I think that when we think about trails, that’s really one of the models in our province. It lends itself to hiking; it lends itself to just casual walking while you’re sightseeing and seeing the historic sites; it lends itself to cycling. We now have people who travel from Toronto to Niagara just so they can cycle on the trails and enjoy the wonderful Niagara countryside. Those are the sorts of models that we want to expand.

My daughter and son-in-law live in Bracebridge, and the Trans Canada Trail actually goes right along the river behind their house. So that just becomes the way we walk to the park, along the Trans Canada Trail, when we’re babysitting. But again, it’s another great trail network that’s building up all not just across Ontario but across Canada that lets people get out and enjoy our province.

Where I see this as Minister of Education is that we want our students to be more physically active, and what better way to be physically active than to be out there walking or running or biking along one of our wonderful trails in Ontario?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I’m happy to be able to comment on Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2015 and to amend various Acts.

I thought the member from Niagara Falls did a good job in his 20 minutes with the overview of this act and how it impacts his riding of Niagara Falls. I know in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, we have a number of trails, and these trails are very important to the economy in my riding. I represent about 100 towns,

villages, hamlets and little communities within Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

But, Mr. Speaker, when this bill was brought forward and since that time, we have had a lot of calls to our office. There seems to be a lot of confusion around this bill. I think that speaks to what my colleague and my friend from Elgin–Middlesex–London mentioned: that there just wasn’t enough consultation done with different groups and people, at least in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, and I suspect across southwestern Ontario and other parts of the province.

This government really does have a poor track record. I’m sure this is what happens after being in government for 13 or 14 years. They just start making decisions here at Queen’s Park and they forget about people out there. I know in my time here—it’s only been less than five years—we had, as the member from Niagara Falls mentioned, the lack of consultation with the horse racing industry. I think a local example for me is in the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London—the member from there, Mr. Yurek, mentioned it—with the whole situation around Dutton Dunwich with the wind turbine development. In fact, we had another 16 or so wind turbine developments announced, and these communities don’t want those in their communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to offer some thoughts to the comments that were made in this place today by the member for Niagara Falls on Bill 100, Supporting Ontario’s Trails Act.

In his remarks, the member did an excellent job, I thought, of making the case for trails, reinforcing why Ontario’s trail system is so important to the economic, social and community well-being of this province. He talked about the Bruce Trail. The trailhead begins in his riding and runs 840 kilometres up to Tobermory. There are 960 landowners along that Bruce Trail system who allow voluntary access to the trails. These are historic agreements based on decades of partnership and trust that have been developed.

That is somewhat similar to my riding. We have the Thames Valley Trail system. That’s a 115-kilometre trail that passes from Port Stanley up to St. Marys. A third of that trail system passes through private farmland.

In both of these trail systems, the Bruce Trail and the Thames Valley Trail systems, what we’re seeing, as a result of the botched, quite frankly, implementation of Bill 100, is that parts of this trail system are being closed now by landowners. There is incredible concern that has arisen about what this bill will mean to property owners. As a result, instead of celebrating our trail system, building up our trail system and making it more accessible to Ontarians, we may have inadvertently caused the potential loss of that very important trail system we value so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I particularly was pleased with the local references the member for Niagara Falls

made, because there are occasions when we are parochial. He and I are both proud of what we have in the Niagara Peninsula in terms of the trail system. What you always have to be careful of is that it doesn't disappear. For instance, I compliment the Niagara Escarpment Commission. When it was established a number of years ago, in the 1970s, I thought it was an excellent system that we had, and the plan that we have that protects much of the province of Ontario, at least that part which is located within the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

The great danger is there are people who can't wait to undo that. Their idea of a wonderful vista would be a Holiday Inn in the middle of the escarpment, or some other development, because they just obsess with development: "We must develop everything; we must pave everything." That's why I think, when we have a system of trails such as this—and I know the member from Niagara Falls would agree with me—we have to preserve it. One of the organizations that has the opportunity to do so, and can be helpful, is the Niagara Escarpment Commission, the people who serve on the commission, who are there to protect this land for the benefit of the people of the province of Ontario.

As well, we think of the Oak Ridges moraine; we think of other special parts of the province that contain many of these trails. I compliment those people who, on their private property, have of their own volition allowed the use of this land. These people are to be complimented. It was of their own volition, and they recognized the public good. But I think they have a right to expect, as well, that those who use the trails are going to do so in a way that's going to benefit everyone and not be detrimental to the use of the land itself. I think the member captured that well in his speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Once again, Speaker, I'd like to thank you and I want to thank my colleagues. It's been a very enlightening debate.

I think one of my colleagues hit it on the nail on what we want to do. We want to make sure, at the end of the day, that we don't hurt the system. We want to make sure that what I talked about for my riding, from Fort Erie to Niagara-on-the-Lake to Niagara Falls, continues. How do you do that? You bring a bill forward that may have some good intentions, but that's not what's going on. You have to get out.

I appreciate the one comment from my colleague that talked about consultations on the Fort Erie Race Track and what we've gone through there.

1540

You have to get out and talk to farmers. That's what has to happen. I said in my speech that it might be a good idea if you talk to them individually, because when farmers or property owners hear the word "lawyers," you've got a problem. With no disrespect to the lawyers—it's probably a great job to have—but at the end of the day, if you've got to fight for the rights that

you already own—because you own the property. You're already allowing people to use your trails, to use your property, and then you're saying, "Well, we've got other issues in the bill," and they're concerned about it. If I'm going to give any advice to the government on the bill, it's to make sure that you talk to farmers. Talk to the property owners and make sure that you understand what their concerns are. Don't go down the road of forcing farmers and homeowners to say, "I'm sorry. I'm not going through this. I'm not going to court. I'm not spending thousands of dollars on lawyers. I'm just not going to let them use the trails." That would be one of the biggest mistakes I think the province of Ontario could make.

The way to fix that is to go and talk to them. That's what I think the big problem is. I've heard it from the north. I've heard it from London. I've heard it from Kitchener. I've heard it from everywhere. They said that you haven't taken time to go and talk to them. My advice is, please talk to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I will be sharing my time with the Deputy Premier and the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Speaker, I'm excited to lend both my voice and my support to Bill 100, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015. Ontario is home to some of the most historic and longest trails in Canada, which provide affordable and accessible venues for many activities. Trails offer a place to explore with family and friends, and a place to experience the breathtaking beauty and rich cultural heritage that we identify with Ontario.

I am especially delighted and excited to speak this afternoon because my riding, the great riding of Davenport, is actually named after a trail. Our archaeologists tell us that before bike lanes were added to Davenport Road in the 1990s, or paved with asphalt in the 20th century, long before it was paved with wooden planks in the mid-19th century, Davenport was a trail. Davenport Road follows a native trail along the foot of the scarp of the old shoreline of Lake Iroquois. The road follows the longest First Nations trail to exist in Ontario. Davenport Road was an ancient footpath known in Ojibway as "Gete-Onigaming," for "at the old portage." Davenport Road was a portage route used by indigenous populations to travel between the Humber and Don rivers. My community, Mr. Speaker, started as a trail. What started as a link to two waterways has now become a link to our cultural heritage.

All throughout Ontario, there are a number of trails that trace long-established aboriginal routes, like the Toronto Carrying-Place Trail, which links Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe. Our history is remembered by our trails network, Mr. Speaker. And just as trails act as bridges to our past, our trails connect us to all of the natural wonders Ontario has to offer.

Cycling lanes, like the one on Davenport Road, encourage and support environmental stewardship through

active transportation. Active transportation like cycling and walking helps reduce harmful emissions and contribute to clearer air and reduced respiratory health issues.

Toronto Public Health estimated in 2007 that air pollution from traffic gave rise to about 440 premature deaths and 1,700 hospitalizations per year in the city of Toronto. That air pollution alone had a negative economic impact of \$2.2 billion per year on our economy.

Bicycling and walking help to alleviate some of the negative effects of intense motorization and help to contribute to national and global efforts to combat global warming. That's why our government has invested over \$130 million in trails since 2009. That's why our government committed to investing \$25 million in cycle-friendly infrastructure, and why we invested \$3.5 million to build the Pan Am Path, filling in over 250 kilometres of trail gaps in the province of Ontario. Those are investments in physical fitness, investments in our environment and investments in our health, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, the medical benefits and costs saved as a result of building trails are almost three times greater than the cost of trail construction and maintenance. Bill 100, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015, complements our government's investment in trails by increasing the support for landowners.

Other members have spoken to how Bill 100 lowers the liability that landowners take on. I would like to address how this legislation protects landowners by increasing the penalties for trespass and by streamlining the process of suing for damages. Currently, a person who is convicted of trespassing may be assigned a fine of up to \$2,000 and could be awarded damages of up to \$1,000. From time to time, trail users will trespass on property adjacent to trails or traverse parts of land where the owner has not allowed users to travel.

During our broad, wide-reaching consultation process from over 250 stakeholders, we heard from farmers who stated that sometimes fences were cut, leading to damages well in excess of the \$1,000 cap when livestock escaped. That is why, if passed, Bill 100 would remove the cap for damages and would allow a judge the ability to award higher fines, up to \$10,000. If a farmer can prove damages, we think that they should be able to sue for them.

Of course, Ontarians have a diverse set of needs. That's why our government has opted not to put in place a minimum fine. There is only one jurisdiction in Canada with a minimum fine for trespass, and it is set at \$2. Instead of minimums, we rely on our judges to decide what level of punishment matches the crime. Through you to members of the opposition seeking a minimum level of fines, Mr. Speaker, I would ask if a teen trespassing at a mall should be automatically fined \$500, or a postal worker cutting across a lawn. Our government trusts our judges to deliver measured punishments that match the crime, so Bill 100 takes a balanced approach, enhancing protection for landowners without punishing indiscriminately.

I'm glad that our government is supporting our trails through investment in cycling lanes, through direct and

indirect investments in trails, and through protecting landowners with Bill 100, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015. I hope that as members of the opposition familiarize themselves with Bill 100, they too will be in favour and vote in support of the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you so much, Speaker. I can't tell you how happy I am to be able to speak in support of Bill 100, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. There are many reasons to support this legislation and support Ontario's trails, not least of which is the economic benefit that trails bring to Ontario.

In early March, I met with Valerie Pringle. She is one of the co-chairs of the Trans Canada Trail, and we discussed their goal to build a trail that runs right across Canada, through every province and every territory in this great nation. It was a fantastic meeting, and a meeting that drove home just how important trail tourism is to our economy and our quality of life.

Some surprising statistics: In 2014, hiking contributed over \$550 million to Ontario's GDP. Trail tourism generated over \$800 million in labour income and supported an estimated 18,000 jobs across this province. Hiking contributed over \$250 million in provincial taxes because the trail tourism sector is alive and growing. It's one of many reasons why our government is committed to supporting Ontario trails.

Bill 100, if passed—and I'm hoping it certainly will be—will improve access to Ontario's vast trail network, building both a healthier and more prosperous Ontario. I've outlined a few of the economic benefits; more of my colleagues will explain how our government is improving access to the trail network with this legislation, and some will speak to the health benefits of using trails.

We have made significant investments. Since 2009, we've invested \$130 million in direct and indirect funding to support Ontario trails. We've mapped 21,000 kilometres of trails and approximately 4,000 trailheads. We've funded a variety of local and regional trail projects, improving accessibility for people with disabilities. We've developed an award-winning central website for trails. I'm sure people are excited about our investment of \$3.5 million as a result of the Pan/Parapan Am Games, a legacy that added more than 250 kilometres of trails, filling in key gaps along the Trans Canada Trail.

1550

This is, I think, something we can all celebrate. As a result of our investments in support of trails, by the end of this year you'll be able to walk all the way from Niagara-on-the-Lake to just east of Cornwall on continuous waterfront trails. Think of that, Speaker: You can walk from Niagara-on-the-Lake to beyond Cornwall, all along the waterfront. That is a fantastic legacy that this government is leaving for future generations.

I do want to raise an issue, though, that I've been hearing about today that causes real concern. We have

spent years supporting the trail network. We've invested years in consultation on this bill, but, unfortunately, some members of the opposition have jumped to conclusions about this bill and are now spreading fear and misleading, I am afraid—I'm sorry; are not telling—Speaker, I just don't know what words to use here. I am going say they are spreading fear about what is in this bill that, in fact, is not in this bill.

Sadly, that fearmongering has led to the closure of trails in this province. That's just wrong, Speaker. Just last week the Manitoulin Expositor reported three major sections of trail across Manitoulin Island are closed for the foreseeable future. That is just not the way it should be, because the minister has been very, very clear—and I am going to read from it, if I can find it. I'll find it, Speaker. The minister has been very clear—here we are—that this bill “would provide an option for willing landowners to consider entering into an agreement to allow some or all of their land to be utilized for trail-related activities.”

He writes in a letter to the editor published in many newspapers across this province, “To be clear, an easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agreed to do so.”

This is entirely voluntary, contrary to some of the assertions of some members of this Legislature. I think it's really important because we're all—you listened to us—so proud of the trails in our communities. I'm going to talk a little bit about that. We're so proud of these trails, I don't know why anyone for political reasons would spread inaccuracies about what's included in this legislation.

This legislation is the result of extensive consultations. Over 250 groups across the province have weighed in. Unfortunately, instead of taking the time to understand this grassroots, ground-breaking legislation, the PCs—the opposition party—have shaped their entire argument around the opinion of one organization. Interestingly, several opposition members have supported—the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I believe, supports this legislation and has said that publicly. Other members, too; the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington supports this legislation. An organization he used to be affiliated with does not, but that doesn't mean that he doesn't support it. I applaud his support of this legislation. Those members understand that misconceptions are just that: misconceptions.

We will continue this debate. We will also address and clarify the portion of Bill 100 that speaks to trail easements. Speaker, I stand here in support of a bill that, if passed, will bring continued sustainability to our trail system and protect one of our province's greatest treasures.

My connection to trails is one that goes back to my childhood. My dad took us out on hikes. Every weekend, part of our weekend was spent walking the trails with my dad. In fact, he would say that his greatest accomplish-

ment—he just turned 90, by the way; my dad, Don Matthews, just turned 90—was being part of something called the joint parks committee in London. This was a committee composed of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, the POC of the city of London and the Kiwanis Club of London. Those three groups got together and what they did is they got rights for trails that now run 30 kilometres along the Thames River, from one end of the city to the other end of the city, north branch, south branch and main branch.

If you go out on there on a weekend—and I actually took my dad, because I wanted him to see what he had done. We sat on a bench and we saw strollers and wheelchairs and bikes and runners and joggers and any kind of transportation you can imagine. People were out enjoying the trails. That's one of the great things that we can do in government: create that kind of trail where we can all enjoy the great outdoors. So I really ask members of this House to understand the intent of this legislation, to take the minister's clarifications seriously and to stop spreading the—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: The inaccuracies.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —inaccuracies—thank you—that they have been doing. This is great legislation. We can all take pride, years from now, when we have an even stronger trail system, that we each had a part in making it better.

It's about health. It's about getting out and enjoying the great outdoors. No matter how old or how young you are, no matter what your abilities or disabilities, and no matter how much money you have, we all have equal access to these fantastic trails. We should be supporting this legislation.

If we can make it better, that's what this process is all about. It will go to committee; we will have those discussions there. But this is really important legislation, and I do hope that everyone will stand up and support it, and when it makes a difference in their community, be there and cheer it along.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thanks very much, Speaker. It's an honour to speak in support of Bill 100 and to follow the member for Davenport and the President of the Treasury Board in supporting this bill.

This morning, I was late for question period. The reason I was late was because this morning was the day when I hold my monthly seniors' advisory group meeting. The topic for this morning's meeting, coincidentally, was exercise classes for seniors. We had a number of special guests come and speak to the seniors and lead a class with the seniors on how they can remain fit—the kinds of activities and exercises that they can do to make sure that they're as healthy as possible. This is something that's important not only for seniors, of course; it's important to people of all ages.

One of the guests who came, just to give you a sense, was Alli Serguatis from the ESS Support Services group exercise program. She had a kinesiologist demonstrating

exercises. We had Maria Kuntz from Bayshore Therapy and Rehab seniors' wellness; Sandra Daniele-Socci from Edenbridge house; and Charlotte Rouse was speaking about exercise programs for seniors at the Islington Seniors' Centre. These were the kinds of activities that were taking place at this meeting this morning.

The reason I raise this is because, to me, the importance of exercise for people of all ages cannot be overstated. To me, one of the wonderful things about this bill is that this bill will allow us to strengthen what is a natural resource here in Ontario—one that we've built up over time, but one that flows from the beautiful landscape of Ontario, of our province, of our cities—and make sure that we give people opportunities to enjoy that landscape, to enjoy that nature, but also be healthier and happier.

I'm not a big hiker myself, but I have at least a couple of friends who are. I know one or two who hike almost every week, and they drive quite a distance to do so. As someone who comes from a suburban community, I value those trails that are available to people close to home. In my community of Etobicoke Centre, we have some wonderful trails that neighbour the Humber River. I, myself, in growing up, grew up around James Gardens, which is a beautiful city park but also is adjacent to a trail that flows all the way along the Humber River. Those folks in Etobicoke who know Etobicoke well will know that it's a beautiful part of our community. There are many others in Etobicoke as well.

1600

This bill does a few things that I think are important. It allows us to better manage trail activity and protect public land and property. It allows us to strengthen the consequences for trespassing on private and agricultural land. I think that's important. I have spoken to constituents who have had people pass through a trail, and sometimes they trespass. Giving private landowners the protections that they need is also important. We all share responsibility in not only making sure the trails are available, but also respecting the rights of private property owners. So that's an important component. Related to that, we're increasing the amount that landowners can recover for damages caused by trespassers. I think that's important.

We're going to establish a voluntary trails classification system. That allows trail users to have consistent information about the most appropriate trail and how difficult it is to navigate. I mean, I'm a novice. If I went hiking right now, I'd be hiking near the Humber River. I wouldn't go out to the Bruce Trail because that, to me, would be a big step. Maybe eventually I'd get there, but for me, knowing how difficult a trail is, what I can expect, what precautions I can take—particularly if I were there with somebody younger or even a senior, I'd want to know what it takes to navigate that trail, not unlike what we do with ski hills when we go down a black diamond or a blue square. That helps me know whether I'm going to be able to navigate that and enjoy my time there. It recognizes Ontario trails of distinction to increase trail awareness.

Speaker, I started by talking about fitness for seniors. I talked about the importance of fitness. I talked about the importance of enjoying our beautiful landscape here in our city of Toronto, but also across Ontario. I think this bill will help us do just that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do have a comment. Actually, the minister opposite talked about how they've consulted for years—I wasn't aware of that—suggesting that those on this side of the House are spreading fear.

I'll just read an e-mail that I received a week or so ago. I will say snowmobiling isn't that big down in my area. We don't get an awful lot of snow, other than last night and maybe one other day in this past winter. But "Concerned" from this email came into my office. The person is concerned that if the bill is passed, it gives the government the right to make any or all trails easements on private land. The concern with these kinds of easements is that they would give any body or group the right to access and use the trail, even though the permission to use it was only granted to one specific group.

The minister has indicated that, well, this kind of an easement is voluntary, but why was this issue raised in the first place? We've had snowmobile trails for a number of years. I know a number of us in this House, when we were in government, worked with snowmobile associations. We helped them set up a protocol—helped them to organize, really, at a provincial level, and this was a good thing. I'd like to see more of this with the ATVs, for that matter.

But by putting that word "easement" in here, it has cast doubt. It was a mistake to include that in the legislation. Obviously, there is a lot of confusion around that term with respect to a sport where landowners and snowmobilers got together, the same as we see with people on horseback and what we're seeing with ATVs. It's something we see with hunters. You get permission—not for seven years. It's usually for the coming hunting season.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand in my place on behalf of the citizens of Kitchener–Waterloo and weigh in on this important debate.

I've been listening to the debate all afternoon, and the takeaway for me and I think for most people is that when you have a flawed process and you don't do your due diligence and you don't do the consultation and you sort of march ahead because you think that you know best—and in this case, it would be the Liberal government—then you have a flawed policy.

You actually do have a flawed piece of legislation and you definitely have a lot of confusion on this issue across the province of Ontario. That tension between private landowners and those who believe in conservation and those who believe in a very comprehensive and inclusive trail system was needlessly created, I think, by this government because you didn't follow a clear process.

One has to wonder why this keeps happening. Today, I just got my final report on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. I just got it. Of course, you know by now that the budget was introduced seven weeks ago. This is the first time ever that a report has been filed seven weeks after the budget has been tabled by the government of the day. I could successfully argue that we have a flawed budget because we had a flawed process.

The comparator in this instance, as it relates to Bill 100, is that if you don't do the hard work at the beginning, you end up with confusion at the other end of the debate, and that's where we are today.

I would agree that a strong trail system is a valued principle of the people of this province. It's unfortunate, though, that we're having this debate about the confusion of what that means for the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to stand today and speak in support of Bill 100.

I too have been following the debate here in the Legislature, and it's evident to me that—I mean, all members have spoken about how they're proud of the trails in their riding and how the trails that they've lived through their own family experience and the experience of the people who live in their communities really have a very deep meaning to them. It's a very big part of our cultural heritage. I think that it's timely that this legislation takes place.

I'm not convinced that we have a flawed process here. I don't think involving 11 ministries and 250 groups is something that's necessarily a flawed process. I believe that this is part of the process here in debate.

I do agree wholeheartedly with the Deputy Premier when she said, quoting the minister, that the easement process is voluntary. I understand that the opposition's duty is to oppose us, but that does not mean—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Only when you're wrong.

Mr. John Fraser: It does not mean taking a piece of legislation and interpreting that in a way that causes some of the confusion that exists. So the Deputy Premier is perfectly right in saying that.

I would encourage all members to support this legislation. Just simply, it gives us an ability to better manage and protect those natural resources that we have. It will provide an opportunity to clarify landowner and land user responsibilities. I understand the debate about process—I don't agree with it—and I wholeheartedly disagree with the misinterpretation, or the misuse of the misinterpretation, around easements.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to be speaking for a full 20 minutes to this, but I do want to put on that a number of the members of the Liberals have spoken, particularly the Deputy Premier, who has referenced me being a supporter of this bill. You're going to find, Mr. Speaker, that I am going to support this bill and I'm going to give you very valid reasons why I will.

But a key contingent of that is that it needs to be voluntary for these easements. That's the biggest consternation that I've heard in my riding; it's the biggest consternation I've heard across the province. I want her to accept my challenge. If she's truly sincere, I'm going to challenge her—she used the words, I believe, “Make it better.”

One of the key things I've been asked by the clubs in my area and, in fact, the landowners' association is to put it in writing to make it explicitly clear what the easements are and mean, and that it truly is voluntary. I think that's a reasonable amendment, Mr. Speaker. My hope is that it will get through second reading and go to committee so we can make this the most effective piece of legislation that there is.

There's also an issue in regard to the transferability, the assignment by an eligible body or group to another eligible body. I think that one of the concerns that people have is just how easy this can be or not be, and what happens 20 years down the road if it goes from an ATV club to a club that has got nothing to do with trails and clubs.

I think those are things that, had they consulted properly and perhaps included the landowners' association, which has very serious concerns—and I have heard those first-hand—that they would have actually had this legislation and had this discussion prior to bringing it forward.

1610

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the minister directly. I believe that the intent of this is voluntary. But if it truly is, particularly with the issue of lack of trust that this government has created, sadly—if they put it in writing, in black and white, that is there for everyone to see—and if they won't, that leaves people very suspicious of why they would not put that in there as an amendment, to truly make it better, as the Deputy Premier said. I hope that they all will do so and accept those amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Deputy Premier can now reply.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the members from Haldimand–Norfolk, Kitchener–Waterloo, Ottawa South and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their contributions.

I'm going to start by commenting on the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who referred to our budget as a “flawed” budget. I tell you, if a budget contains free tuition for low-income kids and more reasonable, more generous student aid for everyone else, that is not what I would characterize as a flawed budget.

However, I do want to address the issue that several people have raised around the voluntary nature of easement.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the OFA—don't take it from me—carefully reviewed Bill 100, and it provided comments back in June 2015. It noted that “section 12 ... is clear that an owner's decision to enter into a trail easement ... is completely voluntary.”

It's already in the bill. It's in black and white. It has been validated by the OFA. So I think people need to

really look hard at this legislation, and really look hard at themselves in the mirror when they criticize this bill for containing something that it does not contain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak today to Bill 100, Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015.

As I just mentioned in my two-minute response, I will support this bill in principle because of a number of reasons, the first of which being the positive economic impact of tourism in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Second, the importance of the trails infrastructure in perpetuity: It's a huge thing, from the perspective of tourism, small business, student employment, from anybody coming to the great area of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and the Bruce Trail. Third, equally, is the active living, the ability to live healthy lifestyles, and encouraging and promoting—I'm a recreation director by trade, and I'm always going to be a person who's looking for opportunities to keep our people healthier rather than trying to fix them once we allow them to go the other way.

"The purposes of this act"—and I'm going to read them from the actual draft that is here—"are as follows:

"(1) To increase awareness about and encourage the use of trails.

"(2) To enhance trails and the trail experience.

"(3) To protect trails for today's generation and future generations.

"(4) To recognize the contribution that trails make to quality of life in Ontario."

Those are four fundamental things that I wholeheartedly support, and I'm not certain how I could stand in this House and say I don't support those.

Equally, in his leadoff, Minister Coteau suggested—I did have a very good discussion with Minister Coteau—and I'm going to again read from this. This was (1), to advance sport and to move active lifestyles forward.

(2) To support tourism dollars: "We know that trail tourism ... represents around 4% of our GDP in the province of Ontario. We know that tourism supports 350,000 jobs ... The trail tourism component of that larger \$28-billion sector represents about \$1.4 billion in economic benefits, and supports an impressive 18,000 jobs."

(3) To add clarity to the Occupiers' Liability Act: "Currently there exists some legal ambiguity around what standard of care is owed to the users of trails. For example, if an ATV club charges membership fees for coordinating rides on a portion of an Ontario trail network, it is legally questionable what level of care is required from the business and from the owner of the trail. If Bill 100 is passed, it will clarify legislation, encouraging further participation between businesses and the owners of trails."

(4) To increase access to trails by protecting landowners: "Currently, if a hiker trespasses and causes significant damage to property, the landowner would have to file two court claims. If passed, Bill 100 would streamline that process....

"Making it easier for property owners to recoup damages will increase the number of property owners willing to allow easements on their property."

The challenge that we're all caught up in here is the poorly consulted, poorly executed rollout of Bill 100.

Perhaps, had the minister worked with our critic Steve Clark from Leeds-Grenville, who has done a great job on this bill, we could have alleviated a lot of the concern out there. There are a lot of things: There's misinformation and a lack of consultation, as I said earlier. They referenced that there were 250 groups that they had consultations with. It's interesting that, again, the Ontario Landowners Association, to my knowledge, was not one of them. You would kind of think that that's a fairly significant group that might have some concerns with this bill. Had they had open dialogue and consultation, we might have avoided a lot of this.

There's a lot of mistrust with regard to the Green Energy Act that was rammed through, and in the horse racing industry, for a lack of consultation. Seniors and prescription drugs—we just went through this. They went out and said, "We're going to do this." Today—and I'm thankful that they've actually reconsidered this—they've actually decided not to double the deductible. That's a good step, but why didn't they consult broadly and ensure that it was there before they ever rolled out that legislation?

There are lots of unintended consequences that have already happened in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I have people who are property owners who have had the trails come across their property. Because of misinformation, because this wasn't clear and they hadn't consulted broadly and widely enough, they have actually decided the trail is not going through. That's going to have and has had significant, huge consequences, not just to the economy of my area but certainly to the livelihoods of some people and to the recreation and health benefits that I have mentioned.

It has created bad property owner relations. One of the local snowmobile club members called me and said, "Bill, I have 29 property owners that I work with. I'm going to have to go to every single one of them." They have their own form. They have it reviewed annually to make sure it's a legal document and it works well. It actually provides liability insurance for the property owner, to ensure that if someone gets hurt while they're utilizing their trail, they have indemnification and coverage. There's a lot of misinformation, so there's unintended consequences.

People fear this bill creates unwanted or automatic easements, and takes away any property rights. We just heard from the Deputy Premier, who assured us this is voluntary. She tells me it's in the bill. Obviously, there are people reading the bill who believe that they don't see it as clearly as they would like. If she's truly sincere to her word, and her government is truly sincere to what they're saying publicly, then why would they not initiate the ability to have a review, do some wordsmithing and ensure that it's crystal clear to the people that are

opposing it? That, to me, makes sense. That's why we as the opposition are here. That's the democratic process. Certainly they have the right to bring a bill forward; we have the right to represent those users that come forward to us, asking for amendments. I'm certainly hopeful that that is—I believe it's voluntary. I've been suggesting in my riding that it's voluntary.

Because of the way they have rolled this out, it's pre-emptively calling off any verbal arrangements they have had with trail users. I have had, as I said, concern from snowmobile clubs in particular, but I keep reassuring them that you would hope, with good faith, that there is the opportunity to ensure that this is so.

I am going to offer two quotes. One: "We have used this trail for over 20 years, but now neighbours are rescinding permission from here on. Trail use looks grim for the future." It's not a good place to be in, Mr. Speaker. It's not good for any of us, and it could have been prevented.

A second one: "Rescinding trails is what we want to stop."

What I hear a fair bit from people in my riding is that no one understands why the old system had to be tweaked. I'm going to step up and offer a couple of things that I believe. It's the case, I think, that the minister has a duty to actually review and ensure that there is a trails plan. I'm just going to flip to that page: "The minister is required to maintain an Ontario trails strategy and must review the strategy and publish reports about the progress made in implementing the strategy."

I'm assuming the minister, as part of his mandate letter, thought that this was a good thing. He's sharing that he consulted with 250 different user groups and that this was a good way to change. But the biggest issue here is about trust—not of the minister; I have found Minister Coteau to be a good guy. I can go and talk to him, he actually listens and we can work together. It's mistrust of this government. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be very specific: the Green Energy Act. My colleague the great member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Jeff Yurek, has shared in this House today as part of this the reality of Dutton Dunwich, an unwilling host. They were assured that they would not end up with wind turbines, but the reality is that they are ending up with them. It's about a trust factor.

1620

I've taken a bit of a leap of faith. In fact, I've taken a risk in my own riding. I wrote a letter to the editor to try to clarify some of the misconceptions and some of the misinformation that was out there, to ensure that everyone didn't pre-emptively stop the use of their land, which really would negatively impact all of our trail users.

Some have said to me, "Why, Bill, are you supporting Liberal legislation after all of the things that we can't trust them on? Why are you supporting a government that has messed up so many things?" They said the gas plants would cost \$40 million, and it ended up being a billion-dollar scandal for the taxpayers of Ontario. The Green Energy Act, again, the non-willing hosts that we've

talked about so much in this House—and, close to my heart in my current critic role for seniors and long-term care, their commitment in two elections to redevelop 30,000 beds. Mr. Speaker, after 13 years, probably I think 15% would be a generous suggestion that they've got to. When I ask for the plan of when they're going to build these beds and where, they don't even have the ability to give it to me.

I believe that what we need to do as legislators is to work to ensure that it's the best legislation possible, that it's actually in the best interest of all Ontarians—not for political partisanship, not because a minister wants it, but because it is the right thing to do. It really is a leap of faith for me, with their track record—their abysmal track record, frankly—on a lot of issues over the last 13 years. But, in this case, I believe it is a good piece of legislation. It can be improved, and I've asked for certain amendments. I'm going to talk about those a little bit later in my discussion. But the priority for me, in standing up the way I have, is because I believe that I need to be here and to make the health and the sustainability and the success of the people, first and foremost in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound but also across this great province, my priority. I believe that this piece of legislation, with some amendments, can in fact be a good piece of legislation.

For decades, snowmobile trails have existed through partnerships between individual property owners and their local snowmobile club, utilizing written agreements from that property owner, or sometimes verbal. I believe, having talked to the minister and other colleagues of my caucus, that those can stay exactly as they are. If it's been a handshake for 20 years, there's nothing compelling anyone to do anything different. In the case of the snowmobile clubs, if they come along and they have their form that they have actually provided for you to provide indemnification, you can sign that with no fear that there's anything else in there.

An easement is a very specific piece of documentation. You, voluntarily, as the property owner, have to initiate that process. Yes, there are big concerns. A number of people have shared here that, as soon as you hear the word "lawyer," as a property owner you start to worry. But, at the end of the day, this is a very significant piece.

Minister Coteau has promised that "an easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agreed to do so." That, Mr. Speaker, is what I believe. I hope he stands true to his word and I hope his government stands true to their words.

As I've shared, Ontarians remain at unease. Who can trust anything this Liberal government has had to say? I'm going to repeat: gas plants. They stood in this House and said that it's only going to be a \$40-million-dollar mistake; it was a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker. What could we have done with that billion dollars for the less fortunate, for education, for our young people that are just starting out in life, our health care system and our long-term-care beds that I bring up? It's regrettable.

Promoting the use of trails is good for tourism, good for people's health and well-being. Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has a multitude of trail experiences: ATVing, cross-country skiing, equestrian riding, mountain biking, snowmobiling, trail running, snowshoeing and the Bruce Trail. The Bruce Trail is 890 kilometres long, connecting communities from Niagara all the way to the tip of Tobermory in my great riding—960 property owners actually give access to that trail. Trail use in my riding alone generates over \$24.5 million annually between the two counties.

We're asking this government to get out there, to truly consult all user groups and all stakeholders and fix the mess that they've created with miscommunication—or at least, not as clear as they could have been in their communication. The trail sector may be at risk of actually collapsing. We want to challenge this government to give faith to the people of Ontario that you are here to do the right thing, to accept improvements, to work collaboratively and to create the most effective legislation possible—not just buzzwords, but truly engage with the opposition, with the third party and with those people that we represent in the stakeholder community.

There are two key issues that I have already shared here. The first is that voluntary component—those easements. The Deputy Premier suggests that the OFA suggests that there's wording in there that they're okay with. That's okay. I respect greatly the OFA and the membership of the OFA. But that doesn't mean that that appeases all groups or that it makes it right. There are other groups that obviously have some concerns. So why would you, as a government, not be willing to engage with other people and bring their thought processes to the table?

A favourite phrase with this government is, "We want to consult." Well, there are groups out there that feel that you haven't consulted enough, and they want to offer you their opinion. They want very specific—one group in particular in my riding, the landowners group, I've asked to put their very specific concerns in writing, the exact wording that they want, and I'll hand-deliver it to the minister so that there can be no confusion on what's being expected from a stakeholder that I represent.

The other one is transferability, the ability for an easement to be assigned by an eligible body or group to another eligible body. As has been explained to me, there may be groups that exist today and it might be that you transfer it from a snowmobile club to an ATV club, because lots of things change. But there could be a group that comes along, and you need some control of who that will go to, because it could be a group that doesn't even want trails. So there has to be some wording in there to be able to control that. It can't just be an automatic transfer. I think that if we can find wording to do that, we can certainly appease some people.

This has been a very interesting one for me. I've shared already that, in my own riding, I've been challenged by people who are my supporters, who actually elected me. They said, "Bill, why are you standing up

and supporting this government?" I shared with them that Randy Hillier, a member of my caucus, a former president of the landowners association—and I'm paraphrasing, but I believe the words he used were, "I've been here for a lot of years. I've read a lot of legislation." He believes fundamentally that this is a good, solid piece of legislation. Can there be improvements? Absolutely. There can be to any piece of legislation.

My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane, John Vanthof, raised a good issue a little earlier with regards to a very specific situation. Where there is a group, for example, a snowmobile club, that wants to put a bridge on a property owner's land—they're going to invest whatever the number may be; let's just say it's \$80,000, and they've done that voluntarily in the past—what happens if that landowner decides tomorrow, for whatever reason, "I don't want you coming across my land?" Now there's an \$80,000 asset that's of no value to anyone. That's the whole intent of the easements.

The word that I believe my colleague Mr. Hillier used was that it provides "certainty" for all groups. You can voluntarily, if you want to, have an easement that specifies a very specific period of time, very specific terms and conditions, and yes, if you've entered into that and three years down the road you sell your piece of property, the new landowner is certainly going to have to honour those easement conditions, terms and all of the restrictions that may be in there. But again, that's certainty for the group that's investing that \$80,000, perhaps half a million dollars, in whatever that improvement or enhancement to that trail would be. I don't see anything wrong with that because it remains voluntary to the property owner. It's crystal clear for everyone: If you're buying that piece of property and there's an officially registered easement, you know exactly the terms and conditions that you've bought that property on. It's not something where someone can come along and say, "Oh, no. Me and Bob had our own little handshake discussion and this is really what was intended." It's black and white, and it's there for certainty for all users.

Mr. Speaker, I think what we want to do here is ensure that, at the end of the day, we look for some of the positives as well, when people say to me, "What's good in this bill?" Well, at the end of the day, there are some changes in here with regard to fines and rehabilitation.

Section 69.2 is added to the act. If a person is found guilty of this offence, a court may, in addition to imposing a fine under the act, order the person to rehabilitate the lands and repair any damage to crown land or property. So if a bunch of people get in there, let's say on motocross bikes, and rip up the farmer's land and they're caught trespassing, not only can they be fined now, they could actually have to spend some money to rehabilitate that land. I don't see why that would be a bad thing from a property owner's perspective, so I see that as a plus.

Part of the credit should go to my colleague Sylvia Jones from Dufferin-Caledon. Her bill, Bill 36, Respecting Private Property Act, 2014, asked for increases to the fines. Currently, a person who is convicted of

trespassing under subsection 2(1) of the Trespass to Property Act is liable to a fine of not more than \$2,000. An amendment provides that the person is liable to a fine of not more than \$10,000. The cost of doing some of this stuff, the challenges that people are facing—because of her efforts to bring in her legislation, we have actually increased those fines.

Under subsection 12(1) of the act, a court is permitted to award damages against a person convicted of trespassing under subsection (2), but the award cannot be for an amount in excess of \$1,000; there's an amendment to remove the \$1,000 limit. So again, Mr. Speaker, it might be a \$5,000 or \$8,000 actual impact. This ability is in there, so I think that's a good thing to actually be in the act.

1630

I think the key comes down to, again, that this is a piece of legislation where this government had an idea, and I think the intent is right. I believe that the minister and the government—I hope the government—wanted to improve the trails and ensure their sustainability, and they know and have realized the economic and health impacts and just the reality of what happens when you have access to such a great trail network. A number of our colleagues here have worked on ATV bills to try to make that industry even more successful and accessible for people, and I think that is something we want to do.

I believe that if they had consulted more broadly, if they had ever actually brought a piece of legislation and let us look at it before they brought it to this House, particularly a bill that, for the most part, impacts a great deal of rural and northern Ontario, we might have been able to suggest those thoughts and we wouldn't be having this debate right now, because it probably would have sailed through with the support of all three parties.

Mr. Speaker, the economic benefits, the health and environmental benefits, the social and the heritage benefits of all trails in communities in Ontario are what I am standing here trying to promote today. I'm going to ask the minister and I'm going to ask this government—I will vote in favour to get it to second reading and expect the minister and the Deputy Premier to honour what they have said, that there are reasonable amendments and input from stakeholders, the two being that, again, the voluntary component from the easements has to be put in very explicit black and white, to the satisfaction of all user groups, and the transferability assigned by an eligible body or group to another body or group needs to be massaged to ensure that the intent is truly honoured.

The Deputy Premier said in this House, "We want to make it better." Here's your chance, Minister. Here's your chance to restore faith in the people of Ontario that you'll actually stand behind your word, you'll accept improvements and you'll make this legislation the best it can be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's always a pleasure to rise and join in debate, even if it's only for two minutes at this

point, talking about Bill 100 and talking about Ontario's trails.

In Windsor and Essex county, we have many beautiful trails. I encourage everybody to come down and use our trails. We have a beautiful waterfront trail that runs from my riding all the way through the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's and beyond, one that I think everybody should come and walk along. Come at night when you can take in the sight of the Detroit skyline. It's beautiful.

To touch on the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound's comments, I think he said something really important right at the end as he was wrapping it up—

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Well, we used to have a beautiful area back there, a naturalized area. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound was talking about racetracks and such. We used to have a beautiful racetrack and slots actually, and now it's been bulldozed and they are looking to develop it. From what I hear, they're going to put in a Walmart, which is quite unfortunate, because we have a naturalized area which is also a beautiful area to visit. It has a beautiful trail. So it would be nice if the government would come down and have a look at the destruction of where the track used to be and see the damage that it's doing.

But back to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and his wrap-up at the end, when he said the part about how the voluntary granting of easements must be clear. I absolutely agree with him because, as we've often seen with this government, the wording is not rock-solid wording; it's not really pinning them down to anything. They can spin it any way they like. I think it's really important for property owners to know exactly what their rights are as property owners and what the government is expecting of them. So I would agree on that. It's not often that our party and his party agree, but on this I do. I think it's really important—

Mr. Bill Walker: That's not true.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Well, you're a little more like us right now. You should probably all buy membership cards, but I'm sure how you really feel will come out eventually.

But I agree that with this government, we need to have everything rock-solid, in writing, so people are clear on what the expectations are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak in support of Bill 100.

I really would like to acknowledge the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Every time he speaks in this House, he does so with such passion. As we have all seen, the topic of this piece of legislation has really encouraged all of us to speak passionately. It's obviously something that is very important to each and every one of us. I'd also like to acknowledge the member for Windsor West for her words.

I do want to say very clearly that there is no spin here. It is very clear, with respect to the easements, that an

easement under the proposed act would, if passed, be an agreement between a willing landowner and an eligible body that grants the eligible body access to the owner's land for trail-related activities or purposes. It's really important to remember that.

I just want to say quickly that I'm reminded again of a conversation I had with Bishop Michael Oulton when we discussed one of the trails near my area, Lemoine Point. He described it as being one of those thin places. A thin place is a place where the distance between heaven and earth is very thin. You're overwhelmed by that when you are out in the environment. It's something that I was very touched by. I can see from the conversation that we've had in the chamber that we've all been very touched by those beautiful spots in our regions.

I understand and respect that we all feel concerned and we want to do the right thing by this legislation. I hope everyone will do the right thing and support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the comments by my colleague the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Yes, he is a passionate person. You see him travel around his riding. Actually, I got a glimpse of him a week ago, and I just went to put my arm up to wave and he was gone. That's how quick he was going around the riding. I think he ate a bunch of pancakes up at Purple Valley or something, which is up on the Bruce—it's a beautiful part of the country—and he was headed for another event.

I think he brought up a good subject, and I think we've all spoken about this on this side of the House; it's called trust. This didn't have to happen. This debate did not have to happen if this had been presented to the people who own property—especially in my riding—if it had been presented properly. And it wasn't. We are still getting phone calls into the riding about what this bill is doing. We've got people ripping up the snowmobile trails right now because they don't trust this government, because of things that have happened in the past. Introducing a bill like this doesn't help build the trust again. They're frightened of the government; they're frightened of what can happen.

Certainly, if it had been explained to them properly in the first place, the trails wouldn't have been ripped up. At least, they would have called us first—called our offices, called your offices first—and got an explanation of what was going on. Maybe it would have put them at ease. But that's not what's going on here right now.

It goes back to things that have happened in the past, certainly out in rural Ontario, where I remember the day the Premier said "willing hosts," and we're going, "Oh, boy. If we're an unwilling host, we don't have to put up with wind turbines anymore." Well, guess how far that went?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: How far?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Not very far. In fact, the member down in Elgin county was saying that one group wanted wind turbines and one didn't, so they gave it to

the one that didn't instead of the one that did. It's just incredible how these things work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound actually does a very good job of advocating for those voices that are not heard in this place. I think that this goes back to the consultation comments that I referenced last time.

I think that we have now a growing body of evidence that this government brings forward legislation that has huge gaps in it. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound mentioned the voluntary easement agreement. This is a major factor which will affect the effectiveness of the trail programs.

As we move forward, these snowmobile associations don't have the money to go to a Liberal fundraiser to make their case for policy effectiveness going forward. They don't. There are multiple little groups all across those trails that are fighting for their rights to actually be part of the conversation. They just want to be invited to the table, Mr. Speaker. They could afford to go to my \$20 spaghetti dinner at the Legion, but they can't afford the victory dinner at the Metro Convention Centre.

1640

To hear the Deputy Premier talk about how "we consulted enough"—what is "enough" for them? When policy is directly going to affect your land, your livelihood, your life—and it's true; the member makes a very good point. This piece of legislation could have been one of those pieces of legislation that came to the floor of this Legislature without any conflict whatever. But what did they do? They forgot voices that they're supposed to be remembering, that they're supposed to be representing across this province. They left them out, and this turns this debate to this point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank the member from Windsor West. She brought up a good point about the slots at racetracks. Again, the lack of consultation and listening to the stakeholders—what's the negative impact?

I would just like to offer one little friendly amendment, though. She said that we almost never agree. I don't think that's true. Her seatmate particularly, Mr. Hatfield, he and I get along fabulously. Mr. Vanthof from Timiskaming-Cochrane—

Interjection: He's a Conservative.

Mr. Bill Walker: He's a Conservative, so that's probably why we get along better. He doesn't have his blue shirt on today. And a number of their caucus I actually work very closely with.

She talked about the voluntary granting of easements. It's an easy, simple thing to make clear.

Kingston and the Islands: Thank you so much for your kind words. I do bring passion to this House. I hope that we can extend this spirit of collaboration to all pieces of

legislation, to work collaboratively and truly listen to the stakeholders and the people of Ontario, and make the best legislation we can with all members, listening to all members of all parties, not partisan stuff. Let's just get on with doing what we were all put here to do.

Perth-Wellington, my good colleague: He mentioned the word "trust." Proper consultation could ensure that there's trust. They brought out yet another piece of legislation without enough proper consultation, and now we're back into this churn again. They can make amendments to the easements and the transferability, and they can make that pretty simply. I want to thank him. Yes, I do try to work hard for my constituents and yes, I apologize for missing you when we passed on the highway.

He also brought up the willing host, again an opportunity for this government to actually have earned some trust. But they missed out on that Dutton Dunwich decision.

My colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo: I appreciate the comments with regard to advocating for the voices that are not heard. I do try to do that; I believe you do the same thing very well at your end.

You brought up the lack of consultation. I believe the Liberals have an opportunity here. They maybe missed it again, but they can actually return that trust by putting something as simple as black-and-white, clear wording around easements to allay a lot of the fears and misconceptions that are out there, and ensuring that we have good legislation that will serve all people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon. It's always an honour to stand in this provincial Parliament and speak on behalf of my residents in Windsor-Tecumseh about the pressing issues of the government's legislative agenda. Let's see, what's today? The 4th of April, and Toronto was hit with 10 or 12 centimetres of snow overnight, more than the combined total of December and January or something like that. I heard it on CBC Radio this morning. Speaker, I have to confess, I may be the cause of all of this bad weather. I'll tell you why towards the end of this presentation.

Maybe my friend from Ajax-Pickering, Mr. Dickson, has already had his snow machines out today, enjoying this spring surprise, as I know he loves his trails.

Speaker, as you know, Bill 100 is legislation proposed to amend the Ontario Trails Act. It's an act that has already caused alarm for many people. It's been said that's because there was not enough consultation on the bill before it was introduced. That led to rumours and uncertainties. Alarm bells have sounded throughout the farming and agricultural communities, and with landowners who have questions about how this bill could impact them and the quality of life of their families.

There was no reason for that. It has already led to a war of words between some landowners and organized trail users. Because of this, access agreements, or ease-

ments, between snowmobiling clubs and some landowners have been terminated. Some trails are being closed.

The intent of the bill was to promote tourism and make trails more accessible and yet, in certain areas, because of the ambiguous wording in the bill and uncertainty about the meaning of the legislation, we are seeing nervous people hunker down rather than welcoming this legislation with open arms.

My good friends at the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have concerns. They want the bill to be amended so that if people trespass and are convicted, the fines imposed will be much higher than proposed. The OFA wants stricter police enforcement of the act as well. My buddy Don McCabe, the OFA president, has said this bill does not encroach on the freedoms of individual landowners. He's also been quoted as saying there's a bogus rumour out there claiming farmers risk having their land expropriated for trails, and that is not true. I read somewhere recently, maybe it was in the London Free Press, that the executive director of the Ontario Trails Council is of the opinion that it could take years for the misunderstandings to be cleared up.

There is a good deal of ambiguity in the section dealing with easements, and it has raised red flags with all kinds of people. Critics lay the blame for this squarely at the feet of the government, for not taking the time to consult on the specific wording of the bill with the public, the user groups and the property owners before the bill was actually tabled.

We should all be in favour of enhancing the use of our trail system in Ontario because of the tourism factor, as well as the health benefits we derive from the recreational aspects of walking or cycling along the trails, but this bill has been poorly structured. We have work to do in this bill—a lot of work—to smooth over the troubled waters, if you will, because so far, what has been put on the table has proven too bitter for many people. That is unfortunate. We want more trails to be available. We want people to use them. If we cross-country ski or snowshoe, it keeps us healthy.

There's a pretty famous quote out there from Raymond Inmon. It goes: "If you are seeking creative ideas, go out walking. Angels whisper to a man when he goes for a walk." Now, I'm sure they whisper to women as well, but the quote given just mentioned a man, so don't blame me for that.

We all know more trails, be they for walking or sledging or skiing, lead to more tourism. Tourists spend money and local communities then do better, and I think we can all agree, we want more communities to do better in Ontario.

The bill has problems. Let's hope they're not insurmountable. Having said that, let me turn my attention to trails in general, not necessarily the ones running along or through farmland and not necessarily the ones frequented by people on snow machines. These have value and are appreciated by many of us as well.

I live on Blue Heron Point in east Windsor, on a man-made pond, one of those that collects stormwater runoff.

We have swans, geese, ducks, turtles, koi, carp, snakes, frogs, ring-necked pheasants and songbirds galore. I have a wonderful walking trail right outside my back door. I'm told when you walk the trail all around the pond, you've walked a mile. The trail is full of people all the time, and more in warmer months, obviously, but every day of the year there's a steady parade of passers-by, joggers, cyclists, folks on Rollerblades and skateboards, mums, dads, grandparents, grandkids, and neighbours just out for a walk with their dog.

We have a wonderful trail system in my area. We have a hill just south of Blue Heron pond. Trails run up and down that hill, all around the base, and not far away, the eight-kilometre Ganatchio Trail is a two-lane, paved pathway. Speaker, in case you were wondering, Ganatchio is a First Nations name for Lake St. Clair.

One of the most beautiful trails in all of Ontario, I believe, would be the riverfront trail in downtown Windsor. It's more than five kilometres. It runs along the Detroit River. Most of it is in Windsor West. I have some of it in Windsor-Tecumseh. At one end you have the University of Windsor and the Ambassador Bridge, at the other Olde Walkerville and the Wiser's distillery, and in between the award-winning Odette outdoor sculpture park and our beautiful Dieppe Gardens, which, because of the bend in the river, puts us due south of Detroit.

1650

Now, I know and you know that we in Canada call our American friends our neighbours to the south. But I didn't get it wrong a second ago, Speaker: Downtown Detroit is due north of downtown Windsor. This is why we in Windsor sometimes refer to ourselves as living in south Detroit.

Across from downtown Detroit, Windsor's Dieppe Gardens is where our young soldiers marched across the cobblestones to board ships that ferried them to the Great Wars. We have several military monuments dedicated in memory of those who served, many of whom paid the supreme sacrifice for our country.

Not far away is Festival Plaza, in front of Caesars, where we have pretty well continuous concerts, parties and festivals all summer long. To the east of Festival Plaza, along the Riverfront Trail, we are very proud of an elaborate fountain and reflecting pool named after Bert Weeks, a former mayor. Toronto has David Crombie, who wanted to save the waterfront here; well, we had Bert Weeks, who did save our waterfront. He led the fight to keep our waterfront open and free from high-rises and crass commercial developments. It was a successful struggle and our waterfront is open, free and accessible to all.

Between there and the distillery is the Joan and Clifford Hatch Wildflower Garden. Mr. Hatch was a former Canadian owner of the Hiram Walker distillery and a great supporter of Windsor's waterfront renewal project.

The Great Western Railway came to Windsor in 1854, the same year we were incorporated as a village. Much of our waterfront in subsequent years was overrun with train

tracks and cross-river railway barges. We honour that heritage with Great Western Park, next to the Hatch wildflower garden. The tracks are gone, as are the railway barges.

The Riverfront Trail, with the skyline of Detroit as a backdrop, may be our most popular trail. We have well more than 60 kilometres of trails throughout the city. I hope you and my colleagues in the House will seize the opportunity to see it first-hand when you attend the AMO conference in Windsor this August. As a matter of fact, I was still on the AMO board when we voted to hold this year's annual conference in Windsor. That will be in mid-August, of course, a wonderful time to visit the most southern parts of the province, Windsor and Essex county.

When you get out into the county, Speaker, we do have 17 wineries, by the way, and I know my friend from Niagara Falls and the former mayor of Welland, Ms. Forster, my colleague, would like to jump in at this point and remind us there are 96 wineries and breweries along the Greater Niagara Circle Route, but they can do that on their own time, Speaker.

Down in Essex county we also have the Chrysler Canada Greenway, a 50-kilometre, multi-use trail maintained by the Essex Region Conservation Authority. The greenway is the southernmost portion of the Trans Canada Trail. As you know, the Trans Canada Trail is the world's longest network of recreational trails. Work on that network began nearly 25 years ago. Eventually it will stretch for 24,000 kilometres, from the Atlantic to the Pacific and up into the Arctic waters.

That's not the oldest trail by any means. My good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound would be the first to tell us that the Bruce Trail is the oldest and longest marked footpath. It follows the Niagara escarpment for 890 kilometres and has another 400 kilometres of associated side trails—but, Speaker, I took one of those associated trails there for a moment, so allow me to get back to Windsor.

We also have the Little River trail and trails along the McHugh, west Windsor, south Windsor, central, Devonwood, as well as Southwood Lakes.

I can appreciate the concern some people have with trails and I would hope the government can clarify for them what the impact of this bill will be. On the one hand, we hear the legislation takes snippets or provisions from nearly 50 other pieces of legislation and puts it all into one coherent set of rules. On the other hand, we have those concerned with the rights of landowners, who see the proposal as an infringement on their individual property rights.

I even read in the Pembroke Observer that the president of the Renfrew Landowners Association has raised the alarm that the government was out to take away privately held land and force rural landowners into urban areas. That's pretty scary stuff, Speaker. I would hope no member of this House is feeding into that scenario.

I've mentioned before, I believe, that I was born in St. Martins, New Brunswick, a long time ago. I was down

there again just before Labour Day last year. The government is making great strides in developing the Fundy Trail, which starts just outside of St. Martins. It has, at this point, something like 23 scenic lookouts. You can explore four secluded beaches.

Eventually, the Fundy Trail, alongside the world's highest tides, will stretch all along the coastline to Fundy National Park, near Moncton. I don't know if it will ever rival the Cabot Trail and the highlands of Cape Breton, in Nova Scotia, but if you're ever down that way, Speaker, check it out. St. Martins has two of the beautiful and historic covered wooden bridges, and it is a very picturesque little village.

I mentioned the highest tides in the world. Speaker, at one point, you can step off the wharf onto a lobster boat and, a few hours later, come back when the tide has gone out, and that boat is now resting 40 feet below, on the clay seabed. Forty-foot tides: quite an amazing sight, as are the natural caves and stony beaches. But again, Speaker, I digress.

I want to come back to Bill 100 and some of the problems associated with the proposed legislation to enact the Ontario Trails Act.

Sometimes I wonder—I really do—why we do things in this House the way we do them. For example, in schedule 1, the minister is clear, very clear. The act reads, “The week beginning on the Monday immediately before the first Saturday in June in each year is proclaimed as Trails Week.” That's clear to me. The Monday immediately before the first Saturday in June each year is when we recognize the beginning of Trails Week in this province—the Monday immediately before the first Saturday in June. Now, Speaker, it's clear to me, and I hope it's clear to you and the rest of us here in the chamber this afternoon.

So why, pray tell, Speaker, does the next line in this bill state, “The minister may, however, declare that Trails Week begins on any other day of the year.”

Who writes this stuff? Do they get paid by the word when they write it? Charles Dickens started his *Tale of Two Cities* with this: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness....”

Talk about foolishness. Are we trying to pull a Dickens here? The week will start on this date—or not. It will start whenever the minister wakes up in the morning and says, “I'm going to start Trails Week today.” Give me a break.

Give me legislation that makes sense. Give me definitions that I can understand. Tell me in no uncertain terms what an easement is and what an easement isn't. Don't give me the “nudge, nudge, wink, wink” bill. Give me the handshake bill, and make it clear and not subject to interpretation.

The week begins every year on the Monday immediately before the first Saturday in June. I get it. I don't need this: “The minister may, however, declare that Trails Week begins on any other day of the year” he deems it. That goes to the credibility of the bill. That sets the stage for all that follows in this proposed legislation,

One could argue that's why this bill has been so badly received, so poorly reviewed and so roundly criticized.

You want trails of distinction? Give me words of distinction. Give me words of distinction in this legislation. Be distinct, be clear, be upfront, and be respectful of the people who will have to live within the terms of this legislation.

You didn't consult with them on the actual wording. You didn't ask for their input on the actual wording before the bill was tabled. You weren't listening then. The larger question perhaps is, are you listening now? Will you amend this bill? Will you improve this bill? Will you go out and clarify what this language means? Maybe then, we could have a real conversation with all of the parties concerned and a new Trails Act that does everything it's supposed to do, not one that is as messy as the roads outside today.

1700

Speaker, maybe I did jinx us. As I said when I began this presentation, I put my snow shovels away a couple of weeks ago. I know I shouldn't have; I should have listened to Robert Frost. In his *Two Tramps in Mud Time*, from 1926, he wrote:

The sun was warm but the wind was chill.
You know how it is with an April day
When the sun is out and the wind is still,
You're one month on in the middle of May.
But if you so much as dare to speak,
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,
A wind comes off a frozen peak,
And you're two months back in the middle of March.

That's what it feels like today, and it looks like that in downtown Toronto—like the middle of winter as opposed to the beginning of spring. It's baseball season. The Jays won yesterday, for God's sake. Those with snowshoes got around easier today than the rest of us.

Trails get us closer to nature; they get families out of cities into small towns and villages. We get to enjoy the woods, see wildlife close up, maybe see the stars—really see the stars—for the first time without the neon lights or the street lamps interfering.

Trail life can be an adventure. Let's hope we don't share the same experience that the Nunavut MLA who just spent eight days lost in the far north had. Pauloosie Keyootak went off on snow machines for a tour of his riding with his son and a nephew. They got lost in a blizzard in one of the most forbidding environments on earth. Fortunately, they were able to build an igloo with a small knife and survived in minus-30-degree temperatures. It was a good thing that they were also able to shoot a caribou. They had just run out of supplies and were rescued at a good time.

Sledding on trails can be dangerous. That's why it's important to carry a GPS or emergency locator. Cell-phones don't always work. Most of the trails in our part of the country aren't as hazardous as those farther north, but they can be just as dangerous at times. I'm not a big

sledder myself, but I understand the thrill of it all, the connection with nature and the exercise component.

We should be able to work together to fashion this bill into a coherent piece of legislation that can be taken to the public—and why not take it to the public, as opposed to making them come here to Toronto to speak to any amendments? Take it on the road. Take it to northern Ontario—the northeast and the northwest—and take it to eastern Ontario as well. Listen to those who will be impacted. Listen to their concerns. Assuage their fears, if you can. Clarify any misunderstandings. Consult, consult, consult, then make changes to the wording. Make it work; make it a piece of worthwhile legislation. Clear up any ambiguities. Maybe we'll see more trails opened up, maybe we'll see a boost in tourism and maybe we can get back to the good-neighbour policies that used to exist between individual landowners and the trail riders' associations.

Thank you, Speaker, and happy trails.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I rise to support my honourable colleagues, particularly with reference to Bill 100, Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. I would also like to compliment the NDP MPP who just spoke from Windsor-Tecumseh. I would suggest, however, that his request for poetry, or for elevation, is actually to be found in the trails of Ontario itself.

As you know, UNESCO designates world heritage sites. It's remarkable that many of the 80,000 kilometres of trails—whether it's through parkland or waterfronts—are, in fact, also designated by UNESCO as world biosphere heritage sites. I would encourage all Ontarians and, of course, particularly tourists from across many, many borders to come to Ontario.

Speaker, with your permission, if I could speak not merely as a parliamentarian but also as a physician—because as someone who hopefully this summer will graduate up from my stationary bike to an outdoor bike on these trails, I can think of few exercises, few activities, few endeavours that are not only as physically enhancing, but also soul-calming.

For example, we as physicians know that there is something special about the colour green. Maybe that's why the folks who designed this Legislature, in their wisdom, chose this carpet. Of course, I'm not talking about neon green or offensive, shocking-to-the-eye green, but the green of nature. There seems to be something that resonates with the human soul, with the biology, with blood pressure, with heart rates, when we immerse ourselves in that experience.

So whether we're looking from a cardiovascular point of view, or a neurological or soul-calming effect, we need to support the Ontario Trails Act, and that's what this bill does.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Again, I'm happy to rise today to add some comments to Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2015 and to amend various Acts.

I have to say it was a pleasure, listening to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh from your chair, Mr. Speaker, as well from here. I always enjoy listening to your comments on debates. They're very well-thought-out debates and very informative to all members here.

Of course, being from southwestern Ontario, it's always great to hear about the city of Windsor and surrounding areas. I know the area very well and, of course, love the information about Detroit being north of Windsor. Is that correct? Yes. Great.

Ontario PCs, as my colleagues have stated, support the goal and the intent of Bill 100. I think it's a worthy goal, to better promote and expand Ontario's trails infrastructure. One statistic, or a number of statistics, actually, that amazed me—and I'll quote a couple of them: Ontario currently has some 2,500 trails, which total more than 80,000 kilometres and generate an estimated \$2 billion in economic activity annually. That is fascinating and, really, quite the statistic.

I know, as I said earlier, that in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and in other ridings around me—Elgin-Middlesex-London and Sarnia-Lambton, of course, where my good friend Mr. Bailey is from—trails play an integral part of our local economy. The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, or OFSC, which endorsed Bill 100, published a study that found snowmobiling generates \$853 million in visitor spending every year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It gives me great pleasure to get up and join the debate and add my two cents' worth—or in this case, two minutes' worth—to what the member from Windsor-Tecumseh said.

I'm looking at the clock. I was supposed to have 20 minutes to speak to this bill today, and I don't think I'm going to get it, so I'm going to relish every moment that I get to add my voice right now.

As the member from Windsor-Tecumseh pointed out—and you can tell that he has been through the bill—he must have really studied the bill—because he brought out the piece about making it Ontario Trails Week and how it's supposed to correspond with its international equivalent, according to what the bill is supposed to do.

I found it really interesting when he pointed out that it says in the bill that the commitment is to make Ontario Trails Week begin the Monday immediately before the first Saturday of June, which seems pretty clear. But now there's some confusion, because then it goes on to say—and these aren't the exact words, but it's what is implied—“or whenever the minister feels like making it Trails Week.”

Again, this is the language that we often see, which is why I have said earlier, as have members from the other party, that we want to see things in writing that are clear for people, so that they know what the expectations are or they know what their rights and obligations are. That wording certainly doesn't clear up confusion. That's what is creating the confusion—not this side of the room, but that side of the room, the government side.

I would like to take an opportunity to talk, as well, about a point that I have in my notes and that the member from Windsor–Tecumseh touched on, which is the Chrysler Canada Greenway. In that greenway, there are trails that interconnect all the way out to some incredible wineries and agricultural lands.

People may not know that, although not right in Windsor but in Windsor and Essex county and beyond, we have wine. There are wineries. Windsor can't claim them, but we can claim fame for some of our micro-breweries and some award-winning whisky that came out of the area. So I encourage everyone to come down, enjoy our trails and the beer and the whisky.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You know what? I might take you up on that offer. You had me at “whisky.”

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to offer a response to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, who spoke very eloquently and very poetically on this issue, as he often does.

It's really interesting this afternoon, hearing various members get up and speak with pride about the trails in their communities. It's fascinating to hear what you all have to offer. There are some members, however, who have tried to assert that Bill 100 is unnecessary and unimportant. I want to challenge this. As you heard earlier today, the relevance of the bill is in part to protect landowners and trail organizers. It is offering clarity on this issue of the duty of care. What is that? If you are an owner who is offering up your land to a trail organization, you should have a lower level of care, meaning that you're not going to be legally responsible for the maintenance and the safety. By doing this, it's going to encourage more landowners to offer up their properties. If you are generous enough to allow this to happen, then by all means, we want to have this lower level of care.

To my colleague the member for Etobicoke North—he was here a moment ago, but he has just exited—I want to say to him as a medical doctor that I agree with him wholeheartedly: Getting out and enjoying trails is a great attribute to a person's health. Too many of us have a sedentary lifestyle. What better way to improve your health and to connect with family and friends than to get out on your local trail and either walk it or cycle it? Perhaps you're going to rollerblade. By all means, we should all be doing more of this.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to conclude by saying that in my riding of Kitchener Centre we are great supporters of trails. We have many. I'm looking forward to the widening of a path on Courtland Avenue, which is just down the street from my constituency office.

I encourage all members to support Bill 100.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his reply.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you to all who responded to what I had to say. My physician friend from Etobicoke

North talked about the healing effects of the colour green. It made me green with envy that he got into that. I'm not sure envy is naturally calming, but I would have thought that with all the green in this room, we'd be less excited during question period at times, but I'm not sure. And thank you to my friends from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Windsor West and Kitchener Centre as well.

When we fashion bills, you'd think we would have learned by now that when we put language in there, we should do so in a very coherent, understandable fashion. We should be very clear in the words we use. We should leave no ambiguity out there for people to misinterpret what we're saying. I believe that in this bill, unfortunately, because of the—people were consulted as the government was preparing this bill, but then when the actual wording came out, it led to a lot of confusion, a lot of mistrust and a lot of misunderstanding. I don't think there's any doubt about it; we've heard from various parts of the province that it has caused some landowners, because they're nervous about the wording in this bill, to shut off the trails that they used to have open to the public. That should never have happened.

The wording in the bill should have been more clear. The words should have been more distinct. They should not have led to the confusion that's out there, the rumours that are out there: “Land is going to be expropriated,” and all this kind of stuff. There was no reason for it, but the government just didn't take enough time to get it all together.

I would hope we can get it all together during the committee hearings and we can move forward with something that is more understandable and acceptable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Before I start, I would like to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Labour and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Speaker, it's a real privilege to stand before you in support of this proposed new legislation, Bill 100, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. As the member from Ottawa–Orléans, I want to take a moment to speak to the importance of tourism in Ontario and how trails and tourism interact. Each year in Ontario, tourism contributes over \$28 billion of economic activity and supports over 350,000 jobs in Ontario. In Ottawa, tourism helps to fill over two million hotel room nights. That's \$255 million in revenue for our local hotels, our hotel chains and in more spending from our visitors.

We know that trail tourism supports 18,000 jobs across our province. If passed, Bill 100 will provide additional supports for our trail system and give the province additional tools to help market trails across this wonderful province of ours.

I want to refer to a few of the trails that I would like to highlight in terms of being, almost, trails of distinction. That would be maybe trails like the Rideau Trail, a 387-kilometre network of interconnected hiking trails between the city of Kingston and the city of Ottawa, located

in the general area of the Rideau Canal and its tributary waters. The Rideau Trail crosses terrain ranging from placid farmland to the rugged Canadian Shield. Or trails like the Catarqui Trail, which stretches 104 kilometres from Strathcona to Smiths Falls on a trail that crosses the UNESCO Frontenac Arch Biosphere. Catarqui Trail was famously an old railway bed before volunteers turned it into a trail.

Both of these trails—both great Ottawa trails, if I may say—have one thing in common: The continuation of both trails is entirely made possible by the generous permission of both private and public landowners. We know that Bill 100, if passed, will provide greater protection for landowners by lowering liability and by streamlining the process of claiming damages from trespassers. We know also that Bill 100 provides landowners with additional tools to provide trail users access to their land.

We know that trails stimulate economic activity by attracting tourism businesses that are associated with outdoor activities and regular recreational users. In communities, they benefit restaurants, local businesses, retail stores and accommodations. In particular, trails can be beneficial to the economies of smaller, rural, northern and remote communities, where economic opportunities may be limited.

A number of studies report on the economic benefits of trails, and I would like to highlight some of them. The Ontario trail survey, 2014, estimated the economic benefit of hiking in Ontario at almost \$1.4 billion for that year. In 2011, 7.2 million Canadian visitors participated in a trail activity during their trips to Ontario, spending \$1.3 billion. That's actually 8.7% of total visitor spending by Canadians.

The Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance manages 2,370 kilometres of trail and has 25,000 users who spend \$6 million annually, generating an economic impact of \$2 million per year. The Trans Canada Trail, when complete, is expected to generate \$2.4 billion in annual economic impact.

I also want to talk—and we heard a little bit—about snowmobiling. I would say this was almost a part of my growing up. My family owned a cottage property and we used to go snowmobiling. I really enjoyed this. I think that provides a way for Ontarians to explore the vast backyard of the stunning scenery of our wonderful winter. In fact, in Ottawa–Orléans I have snowmobile trails, and this hobby creates significant economic activity. If I look at Ontario, snowmobiling generates an estimated \$1.3 billion to \$1.7 billion per year. In summer-time, the trails are used by ATV enthusiasts. In 2005, ATVing generated an estimated \$6.2 billion.

I also would like to talk to you about benefits. When you talk about economic benefit, the Great Waterfront Trail Adventure event on the Waterfront Trail in 2011 involved 125 riders biking 730 kilometres in eight days and spending \$73,000 on food and accommodations alone.

1720

Trail activity: We heard the member who sits beside me, who's a doctor, talk about the impact and the benefit

of trails from a physical activity perspective. It certainly can combat the economic burden of physical inactivity and obesity, estimated at \$7.9 billion, according to 2009 data. The members of this House may find it quite interesting to learn that the medical benefits in costs saved as a result of trail use are almost three times greater than the costs of the trail construction and maintenance. That means that for every \$1 investment in trails for physical activity, it leads to \$2.94 in direct medical benefits.

As much as we can talk about the economic and the health benefits, I want to address a few issues that were brought throughout this debate this afternoon. As we continue the debate with my colleagues, our members will also clarify the portion of Bill 100 that speaks to trail easements.

Our Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2015, if passed, will allow for the establishment of a voluntary classification system and will provide users with a more holistic perspective of the Ontario trail network. That will help stakeholders promote trails more effectively and ensure consistency across the province while increasing trail awareness and local tourism.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this legislation will help sustain our trails and those who allow the use of their land as part of our trail system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise on Bill 100. We are hearing some criticism across the way, but I also think we're hearing a grudging support for the bill as well. I think there's a reason for that.

Ontario as a whole, if we take the partisan politics out of it, should be extremely proud of its trail system and what it has built up over the years. Certainly, I don't think any one level of government can take all the credit for it. I don't think any one generation can take the credit for it either, Speaker. It's been a cumulative effect of people who have taken the interest to make sure that the next generation has the ability to explore some of the wilderness areas, the green space areas of this province, and to get into areas that perhaps they wouldn't typically have access to.

I've been surrounded by trails all my life, Speaker. For the past 30 years, I've lived right on the Waterfront Trail that goes along the GTA. People who are out for a stroll, and maybe walking from Hamilton to Mississauga or from Hamilton to other areas, walk right past my front door. It's something that I've just become accustomed to and it's something that I am very proud of.

I also don't live very far from the Bruce Trail, Speaker. Certainly, if there is a trail that has become famous around the world, it's through people who try to hike the entire Bruce Trail. They start doing little segments, and the idea is that you do a little segment at a time, and eventually, over the years, you find out you've covered the entire Bruce Trail. It's an area that's famous, certainly beyond Ontario's borders, and beyond Canada's borders as well.

I come from a community, Oakville, which takes its trails very, very seriously. As I have said before, it's

because of some of the people who have come before. I think of Mayor Harry Barrett. Oakville used to be a community where there were a lot of large waterfront estates that were right on the lake. You had the Eaton estate, you had the Hindmarsh estate, the Bailey estate, all sorts of large tracts of land that eventually, over the years, because of economic pressures and other reasons, became areas where people decided to build smaller homes. They became subdivisions, basically. Mayor Barrett said, "When we're taking our parkland dedication, we're going to take the part along the waterfront, the part along the lakefront." At first, when he tried it a few times, I think people thought it was a futile exercise to try to return the lakefront to Oakville. In the fullness of time, however, it has proven to be one of the best strategies that's ever been employed by the town of Oakville. I think right now, as we speak today, Oakville has got back about 40% to 50% of its waterfront along the entire length of the town.

So, Speaker, there have been people that have come forward, I think, on a regular basis and have kind of reminded us that we need to do something and that we need to leave the world a better place than the one we found. A way we can do that is through our trail strategy.

Speaker, we have a family cottage. It's about 200 or 300 yards off C trail. Those of you that snowmobile will know that C trail is the equivalent of the 401 in snowmobiling. It's where all the other routes branch off. Basically, I can go 100 yards on my snowmobile, 200 yards beyond C trail, and I can get to just about anywhere in this province: I can get to the state of Michigan; I can get to the province of Quebec. It's because people in the past—and the incredible volunteers that I buy my trail passes from every year, the incredible volunteers in the snowmobile clubs around this province.

I'll tell you that I like going to the cottage in the summer, but I like it even better in the winter because I can get to places on my snowmobile that I would never get to in the summer because of either bugs or the swamps aren't frozen. When the swamps freeze up, you can get back into lakes that you simply could never get to in the summer. So we owe an awful lot to the people who work on these trails on a volunteer basis and also, I think, the people who designed the trails in the first place.

Speaker, in your chair, we used to have a gentleman; his name was Mike Brown. He was the former Speaker and also the MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin. What he would do is that, every winter, he would organize a tour around the areas of his riding. The idea was to bring us southerners up from the south to understand what the economic impact of snowmobiling was on ridings like Algoma.

When it snowed, there was all sorts of economic activity. The restaurants were open; the cleaners were in the hotels—everything that goes along with people visiting. When there's no snow, those people get sent home. There's no other economic activity. I think, in the south, we truly underestimate the impact that trail systems have on the province of Ontario and its economic activity.

Like the member from Ajax-Pickering, Joe Dickson, I am a sledder and an ATVer, and the odd weekend now that I can still find some time to get up to the cottage, I take advantage of it.

It's a pleasure to go into the ridings of other members—like the Seguin trail. The Seguin trail runs out of Parry Sound and winds its way into Huntsville. It's an old train track. A train used to run along there. It's as straight as an arrow. They've taken the tracks up. You can just go along there. The animal life along there is incredible. You end up at the tavern in Sprucedale, and often all the bike clubs come together in there, and the ATV clubs come in. There's not much in Sprucedale until you get a bunch of clubs coming in there at the same time.

Speaker, I think we owe an awful lot to the people who came before us in designing the trails in this province. Bill 100, I think, really adds to that legacy, adds to the heritage of this province, and really should be supported by all parties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: It reminds me of the old Roy Rogers song, "Happy trails to you"—Sunday afternoons—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Sing a few bars.

Mr. Mike Colle: Bob will remember that; I don't think Jack would.

Anyway, I was just thinking about the snowmobile. I'm a city guy, so I don't have an ATV or a snowmobile. But I have my Ford Ranger, so I go back and forth on the back roads in my Ranger pick-up. That's a great way to see the back roads of Ontario, which are really friendly and very, very interesting.

In terms of this act, Bill 100, there is a lot of complexity. It looks like it's an easy thing to do: map out very complex relationships between the landowners, the trail associations, the municipalities and the province's crown land. So it is a very delicate balance. It's not something that a bureaucrat can just sit back in an office here in Queen's Park and draw lines. You can't do that. You have to get out there and talk to the people and get their input. Every piece of these trails, one might say, has got a story of its own.

Years ago, I did walk from the other side of the Northumberland Hills all the way across the top to Orangeville. There was an interesting part of Ontario I had never seen, because you just drive by and you never see the real people on the ground. So it was an interesting walk, to say the least.

In terms of trails, the other thing that's critically important is that, as it says here, it's really part of a future economic driver.

1730

More and more people are hiking, walking, climbing, plus fishing and hunting and the other sports, so this is a future commercial enterprise that's very promising. There's not just the so-called tree huggers that are doing this. Really, it's good business. If you look at all the trailhead-type shops and stores all across the province,

you can see that a lot of people work in this industry, providing everything from boots to clothing and waterproofing, and canoes, kayaks and everything. Anyway, it is a good business decision to invest in trails, because you're really investing in local tourism and local small business. That's the other part of it that we shouldn't forget.

I would also think of the incredible example we should take from Europe. I think we have all heard of these El Camino walks through France and Spain, where people go for months at a time. There are literally millions of people who go each year, walking through these old pilgrimage trails, monasteries, old churches—through the back 40, up there in northern Spain and through France. It is a huge, multi-million dollar business, the tourism that the El Camino brings in. I've always thought of doing it one day, but time is running out. I've got to get there—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got to get there soon, while I can still walk.

Then there's the great Pacific trail that goes almost from the Arizona border all the way up to Oregon—and that's huge—and the Adirondack trail down this side. There are great examples of what trails mean to local business and what they mean to tourism.

In Ontario, we've got, obviously, the waterfront trail. We've got the Bruce Trail. We've got the beautiful Niagara escarpment, a series of trails through the Niagara Peninsula. Even in Ottawa, along the Ottawa River, there are great walking and cycling trails.

Through every city, there are trails being developed by local municipalities which try to get hooked up with the more regional trails of the province or the cross-Canada trail. There's a lot of complicated negotiations that have to go back and forth. There's a lot of planning. This takes years.

I know that in my own riding, about 30 years ago, there was a city councillor by the name of Kay Gardner. She had a vision to turn an abandoned rail line into a walking trail, and that was through the middle of the city of Toronto. There used to be a whole series of electric railways running through the whole city of Toronto. They were called beltlines. Kay Gardner had a vision that this old beltline that goes from Mount Pleasant Cemetery, in the east, all the way to the Keele-Black Creek corridor in the west—that that abandoned line could be turned into a linear park.

It took her about 10 years. Eventually, the city of Toronto dedicated that abandoned rail line, the beltline railway, into a city park. Today, in the wintertime—it is winter today, I guess. In the summertime, there are thousands of people who walk and cycle along the Kay Gardner Beltline Park. If you ever go up Yonge Street, just south of Davisville, you can see that her name is on the bridge overpass: the Kay Gardner beltline. That was the dedication and the vision of one person, who was way ahead of her time. They said they couldn't do it, and it was too complicated, but she did it.

I think this is what this Bill 100 is. It's a challenge for us to look ahead, plan ahead, and make sure that our great-grandkids have someplace to walk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Our Minister of Labour, the member for Oakville, is not listed on the sheet here. He mentioned Harry Barrett and his work with trails. You made mention of the Bruce Trail. Coincidentally enough—I think it was when I was in high school—I spent a number of days working on the Bruce Trail. We were up on the escarpment. It would be east of Waterdown. I think we could overlook part of your riding from that height. I spent a number of days working up there with Harry Barrett. This was another Harry Barrett; this was my father. There was a crew of us up there.

Harry Barrett was a—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The author.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, the author. We were members of the Norfolk Field Naturalists and the FON, as it was known back then. It was such an experience to be up there with outdoorsmen. We built a bridge with a log. About 12 of us could walk this log down the trail and across the creek.

I know the other Harry Barrett down my way—I've known him since he was a young man; he's 94 now—had the vision for the Lynn Valley Trail, which runs down through Simcoe-Port Dover along the LE and N, the railway tracks down our way. Back then, that was a tough go, dealing with farmers and landowners to get permission.

The member from Eglinton-Lawrence talked about a number of very interesting trails. He had to mention his Ford Ranger. I think we were talking about that the other day. I've got a little story. I was at the dump a few days ago. I have a GMC truck, and it had a big clevis on the back. A guy came up on a big earth mover. He jumped out and comes running around, looking at the back of my truck. He says, "What's that clevis for? Is that to pull Fords out of the mud?" As they say, friends don't let friends drive Fords—although I own one as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to stand in this House and talk about the Ontario's Trails Act.

I'd like to take a moment and talk about another trail in my riding. It's the South Temiskaming Active Travel Organization. They started a trail along Lake Temiskaming, and I'd like to thank the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport for the help that they've done. It's a testament that when we work together, we can accomplish great things. That organization worked really hard, along with the municipality, and the trail is a true testament to their work. I think that with the trails act, again, if we work together, we can accomplish great things.

There are a few things in the trails act that need to be changed so that people fully understand what we're all

trying to do. I've heard a lot of good things in this House. The stuff about the easements has to be clarified.

I think another issue that would go a long way is that when people sign an agreement with the snowmobile club to allow the use of their trail, that isn't sliding into an easement—that there are two distinct things. It's either you sign this, and this gives you full control over your land, or, if you want—and there are cases where an easement makes a lot of sense. Where a bridge needs to be constructed or where you want a long-term agreement, an easement makes sense. But there has to be a clear delineation between an easement and a right to use the property. It's the little things like that that we have to make sure are included in the text of the bill, and that will go a long ways.

I've heard some good things from all sides. I've heard some movement from the government. I think today was a really good day, as far as debates go in the Legislature, because I think we did have a true debate about how to make this work better. I sincerely hope, if and when this bill passes second reading, that that true debate continues and we actually come together to make amendments to make this bill what it could be—a bill that benefits all the trails in Ontario and all the landowners who participate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I was very intrigued by the speeches that were made by the three members: the member for Ottawa—Orléans, the member for Oakville and the member for Eglinton—Lawrence. All three, I thought, captured the essence of this legislation very well and made a very good point for probably moving this to committee at the earliest opportunity, so that the input that the opposition and government members are looking for could be heard.

I think it is beneficial to hear that. I always believe that the committees are beneficial places to make those cases. We've had a rather lengthy debate at this time in the House on this portion of it, but I like that. I find it very instructive.

I don't think that in terms of partisan delineation, you will find much of that in this particular legislation. You will find quarrels with certain parts of the legislation, and that's natural, but I do want to say that it's been very, very good to hear the various experiences people have had within their own ridings.

1740

The member for St. Thomas's wife making him go out to walk so he will stay in shape: That's very good.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: She loves me too.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, she must do that, for sure. I should be walking more than I do as well; I must confess that.

This is a very good piece of legislation; it has a lot of support. I know a person who is interested—I won't attribute it to this legislation, but former Premier William Davis was interested in the Canada trail, for instance, and was a strong promoter of that even until recently, when there was much discussion about funding in that regard.

I compliment my colleagues for the excellent speeches that they delivered, and I hope that we will move this to committee at the earliest opportunity and proceed with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I believe this bill is a threat to private property rights, not so much because of what is written in it, but what is not written in it. It leaves room to be suspicious.

I would like to read you a few words from a couple of lawyers and the president of the Ontario Landowners Association.

This is Terrance Green, a lawyer from Ottawa:

"Now, if I was representing the farmer, I would tell them to write the president of the snowmobile club and inform them that at the end of this season they are to close the trail over the farm as any and all permissions to cross over the farm are revoked with the delivery of this letter."

From Kurtis Andrews, another lawyer in the Ottawa area:

"My opinion is that the bill does nothing but cause serious problems for landowners. To be even clearer, it is obvious that the sole purpose of this bill is to take away property rights from property owners."

He closes by saying, "The 'trail bill' is a terrible piece of proposed legislation with nothing but downside from a property owner's perspective."

I would like to read you a couple of sentences from Tom Black's letter. Tom Black is president of the Ontario Landowners Association and has some very serious concerns about this bill.

"At first glance, most people will think that there is not much to worry about concerning Bill 100, 'Supporting Ontario's Trails Act' but the Ontario Landowners Association (OLA) has learned the hard way, that if you let bad legislation pass, then the only way to fix it is in courtrooms at great expense to the individual."

This is the closing of his letter, after much explanation:

"One thing for sure, most people on the rural roads know that when you mention conservation authorities, private property, and easements in the same act, nothing good will come of it."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Eglinton—Lawrence can respond.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the thoughtful comments from all the members—from Carleton—Mississippi Mills, some very good commentary there that I think we should be alerted to; the members from St. Catharines, Timiskaming—Cochrane and Haldimand—Norfolk for their very helpful, I think, input.

As I said before, I think we all agree there are some complexities here. It's not as simple as it looks in terms of building trails. There are some competing interests sometimes. Hopefully, the legislation will be looked at as a way of trying to mitigate those competing interests for the best of everyone. That is not an easy thing to do, but I

think overall the attempt here is essentially to try and bring greater coordination, greater definition, let's say, to a lot of these complex land issues, severance issues, easement issues—I should say more easement than severance. These are things that this bill tries to do.

Is it perfect? By no means, but hopefully, through the input of the assembly and through stakeholder input at committee, we'll be able to iron some of these things out.

Will the bill ever satisfy everyone? Well, I think it's not going to do that, because if you look at this great province, from Kenora to Cornwall to the banana belt there in Amherstburg and everywhere, you've got a huge province with a lot of different geography and a lot of different history. This is an attempt to try to bring in a comprehensive approach to this issue of having trails for future generations. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to begin with a part of a letter that the member from Leeds–Grenville wrote to the minister concerning this. There's a reason I'm going to do this first.

It was written to him by the president of one of his local ATV clubs. It said, "We are being bombarded with requests from landowners to shut down our trail system...."

This comes after a news article brought to light the most damaging bill, Bill 100, to power sports in history.

"The landowner agreements for the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicles can be a delicate one. Most of our agreements come with a one-year trial.

"Luckily we have not had an issue and have not lost a single part of our trail due to abuse. However the minute Bill 100 was presented to us in a newspaper article, we are struggling to survive.

"The bill will not only make it hard to keep what we have right now but it will make it impossible for us to create a much larger trail system.

"With the ATV and power sports industry growing with much-needed trails that you yourself have played a part in will be gone forever.

"I understand what the bill is trying to do but it is more damaging than good."

This is just a sample of what we're getting in our office. The bill certainly wasn't presented properly. It created quite a bit of angst in rural communities because of previous government bills. We've all talked about—at least, those on this side of the House have talked about—the Green Energy Act and what happened to horse racing in the past. There's a real lack of trust here with this government.

The reason I read that article is because it speaks about building trails and maybe not being able to keep what we have.

I go back a few years—and I remember the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane talking about his busy land. Well, you know in time there's AD and BC. Well, I go back to about 1968 BT; BT is before trails. All we used to do was go down the roads and maybe cut across a

farmer's field somewhere. We'd go curling in a little town called Brussels. A bunch of us would take off. Or we would go into Listowel or south into Mitchell or into Monkton—that's Monkton, Ontario—on our snowmobiles. I think mine had 12 horsepower. I think that's what I had.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Is that what you had?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It was called a Dauphin. I don't know if anybody has ever seen a Dauphin before, but it was made in Dauphin, Manitoba, and it was purple. That's the colour of this thing. They blew up about every 20 hours, so you had to keep a supply of pistons around. We all had to carry spark plugs and froze our hands off changing spark plugs and whatever else because they would foul up if we didn't have the gas mixed just right.

But that's before we had trails. One of the reasons they started the trail system was not only the popularity of snowmobiling—which was very popular. Through the 1970s and 1980s, they started building these trail systems. It was a safety thing.

Two of my neighbours, if you look at them carefully—and they're people my age—have cuts across here, right across their face right to their ears. In fact, there was one guy decapitated one year. That's from running through fences. Barbed wire was the worst, but a page wire fence would do a lot of damage too. We had windshields on the snowmobile; it would bring that wire right up here if you were a snowmobiler. There were some pretty serious accidents with fences, because back then—I'm going back into the late 1960s and early 1970s—farms still had fences. They don't have them anymore because the farms have got so big that cattle and the like are all kept inside pretty much or within a limited pasture area.

1750

Something had to be done because people were getting hurt. You can imagine being 10 or 15 kilometres away from a small town or a hospital and a bunch of snowmobilers dealing with somebody who has been very badly injured, because the loss of blood was incredible when this happened; they probably lost teeth and everything else when that fence went into their mouth. It was a desperate situation.

They started to embark on a trail system. They started to embark on asking farmers for their permission to use lands on their farms so they could have these trail systems. I know that where our farms were, we had a trail going through it. The first year wasn't too successful—it was back in 1975, I think, that they had a trail by us—because of some abuse, littering the trail with different things and whatever else.

All we had to do was go talk to the organizers of where they had made the trail and say, "Look, we've had some issues with this. If you guys still want to have the trail through our property, clean it up." And they did. They were very apologetic. There were a few bad actors who made the issue, but the people involved—it was the

Kinsmen Club in Moncton, actually—came out and they cleaned it all up.

That's goodwill on their part and goodwill on our part, and that's the way it was done. It's still done to this day, where they mark the trails now. I think a lot of us have seen the way they mark trails. There's an agreement there with the farmer, and it's usually done with a handshake or just saying, "Yes, this is what's going to happen"—nothing written down—that they will look after those trails and they will keep them clean. Any bad actors will be either kicked off the trail; or the OPP, who are around our area and, I suppose, around other parts of Ontario, will go after them because they are out there on their snow machines too, riding the trails looking for impaired drivers, littering and that type of thing.

That's the trust that farmers—that property owners; you don't necessarily have to be a farmer—property owners have with the people that build these trails and with snowmobilers and people who use ATVs. You go up to the Bruce Peninsula. We have a place up there near Lion's Head. I'm about two miles from the Bruce Trail, and it's the same thing. The Bruce Trail, where I am—you certainly couldn't take an ATV or a snowmobile up there. You have to walk it and crawl up rocks and everything else. But people don't abuse the trail. They keep it clean. There are stations around. There are volunteers around that help with this. I have seen a couple of bears there, which was interesting. They looked at us, and it was sort of, "Well, you go your way and I'll go mine," and that was the way it ended. But it was quite interesting to see these animals out on the trail.

As I've said in some of my comments this afternoon, it's a trust between the groups that want exercise, the groups that want to snowmobile, the groups that want to four-wheel or ATV—a trust built up between landowners and themselves that has been going on for, gosh, I don't know, 30 years, 40 years maybe.

Now we get a piece of legislation, rightfully or wrongfully, that has been portrayed to landowners as, "Uh-oh, here's a problem, and it has to do with easements." As I have said earlier on this afternoon, this didn't have to happen. If it had been portrayed properly, we probably wouldn't have had the issue we're having out there right now.

The people who have called me—and I have gotten I don't know how many phone calls into the office, I've gotten letters into the office, from our regular farm owners, property owners and snowmobile clubs. The government says they consulted with the snowmobile clubs. Well, they didn't talk to the ones in my area; they didn't know what was coming. I have had property owners call up, and they said, "We don't want anything to do involved with government anymore," so out come the stakes.

We didn't have a great year this year for snowmobiling. I think they only had about a day and a half, and that was the end of it. But they're not going to have it next year because these farmers have pulled these stakes out. They say, "We don't want anything more to do with

government red tape. We're tired of it. We don't trust them because of things that have happened in the past."

Now, instead of increasing the size of our trails or maybe having more trails, we are going to end up with less or you're going to have trails cut up so you can't go across one property; you have to stop and go around it somehow. I don't know how they're going to do it. They're just going to mess the whole thing up.

It's too bad. When we have a good, snowy winter where I live, you'll see people coming up from the south that don't have the snow, don't have the conditions to snowmobile or ATV, and at dinnertime or lunchtime or suppertime they're packed around the restaurants. There might be hundreds of them in there. They're going to the restaurants; they're buying our food; they're buying our gas—whatever they're doing. Some stay overnight at the local motels that we have around the area. This is money coming into our economy in Perth-Wellington, and now here's a chance of really messing it up unless the government backs off a little bit, just like they have done with the seniors' drug bill, where they've put it off a little bit: "We're going to just back off a little bit here and put it on pause."

Maybe that's what we should have done with this bill—and for the government to truly get out there and consult with the very people that these trails are impacting. I hope the government would consider that because I know that if this gets to committee, whatever the opposition asks them to do, because they hold a majority on committee, is not going to get listened to, as we've seen in the past with other committees where we sit there and ask questions and maybe throw an amendment or two into the bill, and guess what happens? We're ignored.

The frustration level that you see in rural Ontario with this type of thing is high. It's very high. I would hate to see people that enjoy the sport—they spend thousands and thousands of dollars on these snow machines. That little one I had: I think it was about 200 bucks when I bought it or something like that. It wasn't very expensive. It was a used one. You can spend \$10,000 on these machines, or even more. You can get power steering on them now, which I thought was kind of neat—and hand warmers and whatever else. You can hardly get cold on snowmobiles. They even have them on the ATVs: You get power steering on ATVs now.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Power steering and electric seats.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Electric seats—the whole deal.

Do you want to kill an industry? This is a great way of doing it. The trust that property owners had with these clubs—they had the trust with clubs; it's the trust that they have with government when they throw something at them that, did we need? I don't know. I don't think we really need a bill, especially the way it's proposed here. We just didn't need this to happen. We would probably be going on to something that's a lot more important than this. This is like, as it was said before, we are trying to fix something that didn't need fixing. You don't do things like that, at least in my opinion.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good time to wrap up.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, sir.

I listened with interest this afternoon—this will be short. I listened with interest this afternoon to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. I was born and raised down there, and I remember the trails in the part of the city he was talking about, around Riverside Drive and Dieppe Gardens and places in there. It wasn't very nice at one time. They've done an incredible job—volunteer people, mostly—really fixing that up. I've been down there a couple of times. Amherstburg is gorgeous now—a really nice place. People all over Ontario have done that, and they didn't need government interfering in what they

were doing and telling them what to do and changing a system that really didn't need to be changed.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I adjourn the House, I just want to compliment the members for the debate this afternoon. I don't think I called the House to order once. I didn't ask a single member to withdraw an unparliamentary comment. So thank you very, very much for the way you've approached the debate this afternoon.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

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Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
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Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
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Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
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Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
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Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

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Michael Mantha, Eleanor McMahon
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Vic Dhillon, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Public Heroes Awards

Mrs. Laura Albanese 8298

Grandview Children's Centre

Mr. Joe Dickson 8298

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

M. Shafiq Qadri 8299

Report adopted 8299

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

Ms. Soo Wong 8299

Debate adjourned 8299

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris 8299

Debate adjourned 8299

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016, Bill 181, Mr. McMeekin / Loi de 2016 sur la modernisation des élections municipales, projet de loi 181, M. McMeekin

First reading agreed to 8299

Hon. Ted McMeekin 8299

Ontario Down Syndrome Day Act, 2016, Bill 182, Mr. Dickson / Loi de 2016 sur la Journée ontarienne de la trisomie 21, projet de loi 182, M. Dickson

First reading agreed to 8300

Mr. Joe Dickson 8300

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Rural schools

Mr. Bill Walker 8300

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor 8300

Sexual violence and harassment

Ms. Daiene Vernile 8300

Hydro dam

Mr. Norm Miller 8301

Child care

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky 8301

Elder abuse

Ms. Soo Wong 8301

Special-needs students

Mr. Monte McNaughton 8302

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mr. Wayne Gates 8302

Water fluoridation

Mr. Chris Ballard 8302

Alzheimer's disease

Mr. Monte McNaughton 8302

Special-needs students

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 8303

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2016, Bill 100,

Mr. Coteau / Loi de 2016 sur le soutien aux sentiers de l'Ontario, projet de loi 100, M. Coteau

Mr. John Vanthof 8303

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn 8306

Mr. Norm Miller 8306

Ms. Jennifer K. French 8307

Ms. Sophie Kiwala 8307

Mr. John Vanthof 8307

Mr. Chris Ballard 8308

Ms. Daiene Vernile 8309

Mr. Joe Dickson 8310

Mr. Jack MacLaren 8310

Mr. John Vanthof 8311

Ms. Sophie Kiwala 8311

Mr. Randy Pettapiece 8311

Mr. Chris Ballard 8312

Mr. Jeff Yurek 8312

Ms. Peggy Sattler 8315

Ms. Sophie Kiwala 8315

Mr. Robert Bailey 8315

Mr. John Vanthof 8315

Mr. Jeff Yurek 8316

Mr. Wayne Gates 8316

Hon. Liz Sandals 8319

Mr. Monte McNaughton 8319

Ms. Peggy Sattler 8319

Hon. James J. Bradley 8319

Mr. Wayne Gates 8320

Mrs. Cristina Martins 8320

Hon. Deborah Matthews 8321

Mr. Yvan Baker 8322

Mr. Toby Barrett 8323

Ms. Catherine Fife 8323

Mr. John Fraser 8324

Mr. Bill Walker.....	8324
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	8324
Mr. Bill Walker.....	8325
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8328
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	8328
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	8329
Ms. Catherine Fife	8329
Mr. Bill Walker.....	8329
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	8330
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	8333
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	8333
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8333
Ms. Daiene Vernile	8334
Mr. Percy Hatfield	8334
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8334
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	8335
Mr. Mike Colle	8336
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	8337
Mr. John Vanthof.....	8337
Hon. James J. Bradley	8338
Mr. Jack MacLaren.....	8338
Mr. Mike Colle	8338
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	8339
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	8341

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 4 April 2016 / Lundi 4 avril 2016

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	8285
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	8285
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8285
Mr. Todd Smith.....	8285
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	8285

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Fundraising

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	8285
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8285

Fundraising

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	8286
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8286

Fundraising

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	8287
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8287

Fundraising

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	8288
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8288

Fundraising

Ms. Sylvia Jones	8289
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8289

Fundraising

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	8289
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8289

Fundraising

Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	8289
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	8290

Fundraising

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	8290
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	8290

Student achievement

Ms. Eleanor McMahon.....	8290
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	8290

Fundraising

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8291
Hon. Ted McMeekin.....	8291

Fundraising

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	8291
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8291

Electric and automated vehicles

Mr. Chris Ballard	8291
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	8292

Fundraising

Mr. Victor Fedeli	8292
Hon. Charles Sousa	8292

Fundraising

Mr. John Vanthof.....	8292
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8293

Economic development

Ms. Daiene Vernile	8293
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	8293

Fundraising

Mr. Bill Walker	8293
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8294

Fundraising

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	8294
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8294

Domestic violence

Mr. Grant Crack	8294
Hon. Helena Jaczek.....	8295

Fundraising

Mr. Michael Harris.....	8295
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	8295

Fundraising

Mr. Gilles Bisson	8296
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8296

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Rob Ford

Mr. Monte McNaughton	8296
----------------------------	------

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor	8296
---------------------------	------

Organ and tissue donation

Ms. Eleanor McMahon.....	8296
--------------------------	------

Highway improvement

Mr. Ted Arnott	8297
----------------------	------

Health care funding

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	8297
-------------------------------	------

Community awards

Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	8297
-----------------------	------

Canadian Dairy XPO

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	8298
----------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover



No. 155

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)



Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 5 April 2016

Mardi 5 avril 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 April 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 avril 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S
FIRST RESPONDERS ACT
(POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS
DISORDER), 2016

LOI DE 2016 D'APPUI
AUX PREMIERS INTERVENANTS
DE L'ONTARIO (ÉTAT DE STRESS
POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Mr. Flynn moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail et la Loi sur le ministère du Travail relativement à l'état de stress post-traumatique.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Flynn.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise today, certainly. I'm going to share the short time we have with the Honourable Yasir Naqvi, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. It's a pleasure to be here and to be joined by so many members of our first responders community. I know I speak for the entire government when I say how proud we are to bring forward Bill 163, Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the member from High Park. I know she's as proud as anybody in this House today, and rightfully so.

Bill 163 will presume that PTSD diagnosed in first responders is work-related. It's going to provide timely access to WSIB programs and to benefits. It will also provide a sense of security for first responders and their families.

I'm proud of this bill, but our strategy in this respect is much larger than just this bill. Presumptive legislation is extremely important, but our strategy is more comprehensive. We want to prevent people from suffering from PTSD in the first place. That's why, along with Bill 163, our PTSD strategy includes an awareness campaign that some of you may have started to hear; a free online tool

kit with resources on PTSD for those who can't create their own programs; an annual leadership summit to highlight best practices, recognize leaders and monitor progress in dealing with PTSD; and grants to support research into PTSD so that Ontario remains a leader and we stay on top of the newest information.

To ensure that employers of first responders have proper plans in place to prevent and deal with PTSD, the legislation also allows me, or any future Minister of Labour, to require all employers to provide their plans to the ministry.

This piece of legislation is the right thing to do. We owe it to people who put themselves in harm's way each and every day to ensure our protection. I think, coupled with prevention and the resiliency training the province is putting into place, this bill is a huge step forward in recognizing the importance of psychological health in the workplace.

I'm going to turn it over to my colleague now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Government House leader.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand here today in support of Bill 163, the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act. I'm honoured to support this bill, and I'm honoured to see such non-partisan support for this initiative. I can tell you that I've worked closely with first responders since I was first elected a city councillor 16 years ago in Barrie, and I'm proud to call myself a friend of the community. One of my greatest honours is actually being named an honorary firefighter. I take that designation very seriously, because these individuals never shy away from an opportunity to stand up for their communities, to protect the safety that we all cherish. I have great respect for the hard work and the sacrifice that they put forward.

Each day, there are reminders of the courage of first responders, who face unforeseen risks in their work each day in an effort to protect others. This includes post-traumatic stress disorder, Mr. Speaker. It's a risk that they take on. When I speak with police officers in Midland or firefighters in Sault Ste. Marie or paramedics here at Queen's Park, as I travel the province, I am told again and again about the dangers of post-traumatic stress disorder. Some I have met with have suffered PTSD themselves; others have watched their friends and colleagues suffer. PTSD isn't something you can shake off; PTSD is real.

I remember being in London, Ontario, meeting with Dan Axford from the London Police Association, who told me, "We have to see things you never want to see." He told me a story about an officer who had to carry a young boy in his arms who had been hit and killed by a car. He said that those are the types of moments that shake you. He said that he couldn't sleep afterward. He had nightmares, and he didn't realize at the time how much that incident affected him. There are countless stories like that across the province of Ontario, and when these brave men and women ask for help, it must be available.

A story closer to home: I think of my good friend Kevin White, who was the president of the Barrie Professional Fire Fighters Association. I remember sitting with him at his fire hall 10 years ago and him telling me that when Billy Wilkins ran into a fire and lost his life, everyone on the force was affected, but particularly those who served with Billy needed help for years but didn't have the ability to receive that help. We need to make sure that people who see things we never want to see have that treatment available. They are our heroes, and we need to provide that service for them.

PTSD is a growing problem. First responders experience PTSD at two times the rate of the average population. The prevalence of PTSD for emergency services is 16% to 24%, compared to 8% in the average Canadian population. Thirty-eight first responders died by suicide in 2015. Between January 1 and February of this year, nine first responders have committed suicide; seven of them from Ontario.

We need to make sure that we're providing our front-line emergency personnel with the help they need when they need it. If you are a first responder with PTSD, you shouldn't have to spend years fighting with WSIB bureaucracy to prove it. This is an issue that I've been proud to bring forward. I'm proud that on my first day as leader of the Ontario PC Party—my first day as leader of the official opposition—this was my second question in the Legislature, because I have heard countless stories across the province. I said at the time that there is no monopoly on a good idea. It doesn't matter which party puts it forward; if it's for the betterment of Ontario, we will support it.

When the NDP put forward thoughtful legislation to help move forward the yardsticks on treatment for PTSD, we enthusiastically supported it. Today we have legislation put forward by the Minister of Labour. It doesn't matter that he is on the other side of the aisle; it is good legislation. It will be a step forward for first responders in their need for treatment for PTSD. I say thank you to the Minister of Labour for doing the right thing, for putting forward thoughtful legislation, and I am proud to stand in support of it; I'm proud that our caucus—our PC caucus—is supporting Bill 163. This bill will provide faster access to resources and treatment for first responders who face serious challenges related to PTSD.

I hope that all members in this House will support this important law. This isn't about politics; this isn't about

what side of the aisle we sit on. We cannot afford to let Ontario's first responders suffer from this serious condition any longer than we already have. Let's show the people of Ontario that public policy can be used as a force for good, that it has the ability to improve the lives of those at risk who risk their lives every day to protect our safety, and hopefully it can be used to save lives this time, but save the lives of first responders.

0910

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's indeed a pleasure and an honour to rise today. The first people I want to thank are the first responders themselves, because without their support from day one on this bill, this bill would not have become a reality. I want to thank them for what they do for us every single day. Police, fire, corrections, paramedics: Thank you all. You deserve a round of applause.

When I think about the life of this bill, its early iterations as my bill and later as a government bill, I also want to thank everyone in this House, all of my colleagues, for making this a possibility. It's a rare non-partisan moment when we can celebrate something like this, and I think we should.

I also think of a couple of faces that come to mind—first and foremost, a young paramedic named Shannon Bertrand, who walked into my office eight years ago. She was the one who confided in me her troubles and her troubles getting coverage with WSIB, which is where this all started. Paramedics got behind it, police got behind it, fire got behind it, corrections got behind it, and I'm going to talk about the other groups that got behind it, too.

The very first iteration of this bill said "all workers." That's what it said. It was very clear the government would not back that, it would not pass that, so we narrowed it down to the obvious ones, the first responders. We heard the leader of the official opposition talking about who those groups are and their high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder.

The other person I think about, and I will never get this memory out of my mind, is the suicide call that we received in my Queen's Park office. It was a suicide distress call from a firefighter. He said, "Please don't call first responders," because he knew what it was like to be a first responder and go to a suicide call. He didn't want his brothers and sisters having to do what he had had to do that brought on his own post-traumatic stress disorder. Of course, as responsible citizens, we couldn't do anything but. We phoned the first responders to go to the house of a first responder to prevent that suicide. So I think of him. He will be unnamed, but I think of him and I send my prayers and love out to him and his family.

A couple of things: In the committee hearings on this bill, we would have liked to have seen some broadening of the scope. Here was a historic opportunity—not that this isn't, and we celebrate this passage, but I want to let everyone know that in the New Democratic Party, we're not going to rest at this. We're going to continue to fight until nurses are covered by this, until special constables

are covered by this, bailiffs and parole officers and anyone else who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder on their job. That truly is where we should be going in the future.

The other aspect of this bill we would have liked to have seen different was the coverage period itself. Some 24 months is not time enough; it should have been five years. Again, that's something that we hope to see in regulation down the years from now.

The other one that's particularly egregious, I think, is that anybody who has had a claim rejected by WSIB for PTSD cannot reopen that claim. I think that's sad. That's a truly missed opportunity because many of the people whose stories brought us to this place had claims rejected by WSIB. Those are the heroes who we should be celebrating today, and the fact that they are written out of this bill is a laugh. It's a sad thing. So on their behalf—many of them are quite angry about that, I must say, and with good reason—we'll keep fighting on in the New Democratic Party until they are also covered and given the dignity that they deserve, again, hopefully through regulation in the years to come. We want to see that day come as well.

In terms of prevention and what we do moving forward: Constable Garda, who committed suicide—his sister was in my office and had great ideas.

So rest assured, all first responders: We're not stopping here. From here on out, we will be working with the Minister of Labour on what those regulations look like, what the protocols should look like to prevent PTSD, to help those with PTSD. In the wake of a traumatic incident, what do you do with folk who have been part of that? That's a huge piece of work, and we in the New Democratic Party are not going to stop until that work is done. Until those who race into danger for us are really covered and really looked after, our work in this Legislature has only just begun.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's a great honour for me to speak on this bill in a very short period of time. I want to start by thanking the Minister of Labour, whom I personally call a friend. I know personally his passion around PTSD-related issues and healthy workplaces. I really want to thank him for his passion in this matter.

Most importantly, Speaker, to all our friends who are here in the House from fire, police, paramedics, corrections: Through you, I want to thank all your members, all our first responders across this province, for everything they do in making us safe every single day.

Speaker, this is a very important issue. I think we all have heard stories of first responders in our communities who have put their lives on the front line to make us safe, but then have suffered some serious consequences around their mental health.

There is a lot of work to be done. This is just the beginning of the work; I think everybody will acknowledge that. That is why I would argue that the work around prevention is the most important aspect of this strategy.

The presumptive piece of legislation is important to make sure that those who suffer from PTSD get the care they need. But most importantly, Speaker, we need to make sure that people don't even suffer from PTSD at the outset, that they have the right type of supports in terms of building resiliency, in terms of making sure they get the care, if diagnosed, so they can continue in their chosen profession. One thing I have learned from first responders is that this is not a job; it's a calling. In order for you to live your calling, we need to make sure that all the necessary tools are there.

Speaker, one thing I'm particularly proud of about this bill, which I thought was a serious oversight in the NDP bill, is that corrections officers and correctional nurses are included in this bill. That is a very important aspect. I have seen first-hand the kind of work they do in our correctional facilities, and I'm really happy that those first responders are included in this bill.

I also recognize that probation and parole officers, who also face unique stresses, were not part of this bill. But, as I said, I know that more work needs to be done in order to address the challenges they face and the emotional impact these can have. I want to be clear that we will continue to work with our probation and parole officers to ensure that we build on and enhance existing programs, and that they have supports they very much need.

Once again, I thank all the members for their kind remarks. This is a very important bill, and we've taken a huge step forward in ensuring that our first responders are protected in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd also like to welcome the first responders to the Legislature today.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 2, 2016, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Flynn has moved third reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. This bill is deferred for a vote after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

0920

WASTE-FREE ONTARIO ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 23, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 and to repeal the Waste Diversion

Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur la récupération des ressources et l'économie circulaire et la Loi transitoire de 2016 sur le réacheminement des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act, which I fully support. It's good to hear in this debate the support that exists around the House for this bill and the importance of reducing waste in Ontario.

Last weekend, I was out knocking on doors in my community, and I ran into a man named Don. Don said, "I've been meaning to come and see you. I have something really important I want to talk to you about." He said it is unbelievable, how much stuff people throw out.

Don is a man of limited means. Part of the way he supplements his means is he cashes in returnable bottles that he gets out of people's blue bins, so he sees a lot of waste and a lot of garbage. He was really quite passionate about it, telling me about what they were doing in different places in Canada and some places in the United States. It wasn't just because it was his income. It was because he saw that we are still having very serious challenges in Ontario with what we throw in our garbage.

As I said, I'm pleased that there's a level of support for this bill. I know the member for Leeds–Grenville said, "It's a very substantial act, and I want to thank the ministry for including some of the suggestions that our party and others in the province made on the previous bill, Bill 91."

We all put out our blue bins and our green bins—if you have green bins in your city. I do it Sunday night before I leave to come back here to Queen's Park. It feels great that things have changed and that we put more effort into recycling in homes. But when I actually look at it at night, when I put the stuff out on Sunday nights, I go, "There's still an incredible amount of stuff in that recycling."

One of the challenges is, are we actually reusing, or reducing the level of packaging that we are using in the things that we sell? That's why it's so important that this bill addresses producer responsibility. It's clear, inside the industry, inside the sector, that there's an understanding that what we have now is not good enough. The status quo is not good enough. By increasing producer responsibility and giving some flexibility, we will be able to reduce, reuse and maybe reincarnate some of those—it will give some imagination to producers as to how—and some initiative and some force—to increase their commitment to ensuring that we don't fill our landfills up with stuff. We just can't keep digging holes in the ground and burying our garbage ad infinitum. There's a limited resource out there.

I know the minister is very passionate about this. I congratulate him for bringing this bill forward.

I also know that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, "We're largely in support of this act."

"We can act on waste diversion in a way that truly, truly reduces the amount of waste we are turning to our landfills in this province, because it's something we must do."

I can't agree with him more.

This act will also revamp waste diversion in Ontario, and the oversight and authority. Waste Diversion Ontario will be changed to a non-crown authority which will have stronger oversight powers and provide a framework in which we can ensure that we are going to achieve those goals and targets that we have set forward.

Mr. Speaker, my background is in the grocery business. I spent about 20 years working in the grocery business. That business realized a long time ago that it could utilize—and it was actually an economic benefit to utilize—things that were generally thought of as waste. For instance, recycling cardboard began when I first started working in that industry; we used to bale cardboard. Rendering of meat products—organics. Those products were reused. They weren't just dumped in a landfill; they were used to make other products. There was an economic benefit in that industry to do those things and take a look at that.

Actually, really innovative and smart industries take a look at the waste products they have and how they can utilize them to increase their profitability and viability. It's not just a socially responsible thing to do, to ensure that we are not increasing the amount of waste we are putting into the ground or the air; it's a smart economic play.

As I said, it's good to see the support for this bill. The member for Prince Edward–Hastings called it a good initiative. The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex said, "Just to clarify things, we will ... be supporting the bill...." It's good to know. My colleague from Nepean–Carleton has indicated that she supports this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we have been debating this bill in the Legislature for a while. As we can see, there is a good level of support. I think this bill is ready to go forward. I'm sure there is interest on all sides of the Legislature in getting this bill to committee.

As I said, this is Bill 151; we did have Bill 91 in a previous session. This bill has seen nearly 10 hours of debate, and almost half of the members of the Legislature have debated this bill, so there has been a wide range of viewpoints.

Mr. Speaker, I think there are other pieces of legislation that we could get to, and that would be the most effective use of this Legislature's and this assembly's time.

I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Fraser has moved that the question be now put. I have discussed this with the Clerks' table. I am of the conclusion, and am satisfied, that there have been 10 hours of debate on this question and over 26 members have spoken to it.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

This motion will be voted on after question period.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, no further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 0928 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to introduce Innis O'Grady, a Ryerson University student who is in the gallery with us today. I've been fortunate enough to have him working in my office as an intern for the past couple of months now, and I'm extremely grateful for all his hard work. Welcome again to Queen's Park. There he is in the gallery: Innis.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We're absolutely honoured to have in the House today members from the Ontario Provincial Police Association, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Paramedic Association, the Toronto Paramedic Association, the Tema Conter Memorial Trust, OPSEU paramedics and correctional workers, CUPE paramedics, Unifor and the Civic Institute of Professional Personnel. We welcome them all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Barrie.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just so that you know, I've recognized the member from Barrie for introductions, but it looks like there are quite a few. Let's keep them brief and no explanations, please; just the introductions, so that we can get on with it.

The member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: From my riding of Barrie, I would like to welcome paramedic Natalie Harris to the Legislature. Natalie founded the Wings of Change-Peer Support program, which strives to help first responders, health care providers, military members and communications officers cope with the difficulties in their line of work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for the very short, brief introduction.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce, in the gallery today with the EMS, Joe Emilio from Sarnia-Lambton, representing Lambton county's EMS. Also, in the other gallery: Rory Ring, formerly of Sarnia, the new president of the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a number of first responders to introduce today: Carmen Santoro, the president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association,

and his members; Jeff Van Pelt and Chris Day from CUPE ambulance; and Chris Stolte and Joe Emilio with the SEIU.

From corrections, we have Tammy Carson, the provincial health and safety co-chair; Alex Sawicki, the second vice-president; and Monte Vieselmeyer, ministry employee relations.

From the police, we have Bruce Chapman, the president of the PAO; Stephen Reid, the executive director of PAO; and from the OPPA we have Chris Hoffman.

Please welcome all of the first responders to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to welcome three people: Kirishika Ethayarajan, Jessica Ngo and Kyle O'Brien. These are students from the child and youth program at George Brown College. They live in the riding of Scarborough-Rouge River. As part of their final-year project, these students have created a website to help victims of child pornography. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'd like to introduce Greg Stephenson from the Thunder Bay Police Association and Eric Nordlund from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, the district 7 vice-president from Thunder Bay.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my pleasure to welcome so many to the Legislature. Members from OPSEU—welcome to Clarke Eaton. From corrections, we have Tammy Carson, Monte Vieselmeyer and Alex Sawicki. We also have Joel Usher and Tim Szumlanski from OPSEU. Welcome to Chris Hoffman of the OPPA, and from the PAO, Bruce Chapman, Stephen Reid and Michael Duffy. From the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association there's Carmen Santoro. And Jeff Van Pelt, I see you in the corner, from my area, from CUPE ambulance—and so many other familiar faces. Thank you for all you do and for coming today.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' west gallery today, I would like to welcome Jeff Chartier, president of Peterborough Police Association, and Dave McFadden, past president of Peterborough Police Association and of the Police Association of Ontario.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce Xiao Chen, mother of our page captain today, Jierui Jiang.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce two SEIU paramedics, Chris Stolte and Joe Emilio. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to introduce two firefighters from Durham: Dan Bonnar, of the Ajax Professional Fire Fighters Association, and, from a neighbouring community, Neil Delory, secretary of the Pickering Professional Firefighters Association. Welcome, gentlemen.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park some Windsor firefighters: Wayne Currie, Andre Gingras, and the president of the Windsor Professional Fire Fighters Association and, I might point out, the author of the incredibly moving letter I read

during my time on the PTSD bill, Duane Janisse. Welcome.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming members from the Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization: Dr. Cameron Piron, president of Synaptive Medical; Dr. David Young, CEO of Actium Research; Brian Courtney, CEO of Conavi; Arun Menawat, president and CEO of Novadaq; and also, Gail Garland, president and CEO of OBIO. They are in the west gallery. I invite all members to attend their reception in the legislative dining room this evening.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm delighted to welcome, from Kitchener Centre, Mike Sullivan, with the Kitchener-Waterloo police association.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to introduce two first responders from my riding: Rob Todd from the Halton Regional Police Association, and Dan VanderLelie, from the Burlington Professional Firefighters Association—and, if I may, the family of my page, Deanna Clark: mother, Tracy Beazley Clark; dad, Michael; and brother Connor. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome Daniel Perry. He's a Loyalist College student who has been working for the last couple of months in my Belleville constituency office. Welcome to Queen's Park, Daniel.

Hon. David Oraziatti: I'm pleased to introduce Monica Dale, president of the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce; Rory Ring, executive director of the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce; and Richard Bennett, a Sault Ste. Marie paramedic.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's an honour for me to welcome the executive director of Badge of Life Canada. We have Mr. Bill Rusk with us this morning for question period. Welcome, sir.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: A constituent of mine is here today, part of our wonderful paramedic team in Ottawa: Mr. Norm Robillard. I would like to welcome him to our Legislature.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to welcome two members of the Cambridge Professional Fire Fighters' Association: John Holman and Jordan Armstrong, both constituents and friends of mine from Cambridge.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to introduce Chief Paul Charbonneau from Frontenac county, representing the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs. Welcome.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je souhaite la bienvenue à Amanda Simard, qui est ici dans la galerie. Elle est conseillère de la municipalité de Russell dans la circonscription de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell—mon amie est ici aussi.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my privilege to welcome Ralph and Kyra Thistle, who are joining us here in the Legislature. We met them at committee for Bill 163. Welcome back.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Mr. Speaker, I know you were saving the best for last. But it is my great pleasure to welcome Chief Paul Charbonneau of the county of

Frontenac, one of the two oldest and longest-serving chiefs in Ontario, with over 40 years of service to the industry. He is with us today representing the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs. I would also like to welcome Fred Leblanc, one of our firefighters in Kingston, and acknowledge Ann Bryan, president of the Kingston Professional Firefighters Association. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's my pleasure to welcome Brent Heppell from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. He's a district 1 vice-president. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Mr. Speaker, Premier and all members of the Legislature, I would ask you respectfully to help me to welcome, not only to the Legislature of Ontario but also to Canada, a group of Syrian refugees: Loqman Yousef Al Masri and his wife, Yusra, and their children, Adnan, Emad, Mohammed and Jury; Bilal Abo Al Hawa and his wife, Marwa, and their children, Alian and Miral; and Yasmine Musto and her children, Rawan, Areej, Malaz and Mahmoud.

1040

Also, members of COSTI Immigrant Services—Bruno Suppa, Mario Calla, Tanaz Pardiwalla, Mirna El Sabbagh, Lynde Yasui, Mary Gharwal, Yasmine Dossal, Andrea Brambilla—and Mr. Fares Sultan.

Welcome them, Speaker. They touched down in Canada six weeks ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all of our guests.

We have with us, also in the Speaker's gallery today, 20 teachers from across the province, participating in the fifth annual Legislative Assembly of Ontario Teacher's Forum. Welcome to our teachers from across Ontario. We're glad you're here.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of World Autism Awareness Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons for World Autism Awareness Day. Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier.

After the recent budget, I applauded the government's investment for autism funding. But just days before World Autism Awareness Day, this government announced their new plan. The result of a Toronto Star

investigation—reported on April 1 that families were left “devastated” by the changes to the autism program. The government is kicking over 2,000 children off the IBI autism treatment waiting list. In exchange, the government offered a pittance of transitional funding to cover private therapy.

Mr. Speaker, where does the Premier expect parents to find \$50,000 to pay for this private treatment? Won't the Premier listen to the Toronto Star?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Ahlan wa Sahlan, to our visitors. I want to welcome everyone to the Legislature today.

I want to just say that we are committed to improving the lives of children and youth with autism, and we're committed to providing them with the best possible services based on the best possible evidence. It is incredibly important that we look at what is working and look at the evidence.

With the prevalence of autism increasing, so were wait times increasing. That status quo was unacceptable, and that's why our budget makes a historic \$333-million investment in a new Ontario autism program.

It's very important that through this investment, the new program will give 16,000 more children access to services: 500 to IBI, which is the intensive behavioural intervention, and 15,500 to access applied behavioural analysis.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Putting the spin aside, the reality is the Liberals are kicking children off the wait-list, without the new programs ready to go. I understand that the government wants to reduce wait times for autism treatments. But their solution is to kick children off the wait-list? Really? This seems to be a pretty heartless way to score political points and tout shorter wait times.

The government said the cost of inaction was too high. Is that what they're telling parents of autistic children who say they now have to pay \$50,000 a year for private treatment?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let's just go through what this investment will do. It will give 16,000 more children access to services. That's 500 getting more IBI, and 15,500 getting applied behavioural analysis. We'll cut the wait times for service in half within the next two years.

What the evidence shows, what the science says, is that IBI is very, very effective in the early years. There were children sitting on the wait-list—young children—when the window of opportunity for IBI was absolutely closing. So what we need to do is to make sure that younger children get that IBI and that the applied behavioural analysis is available to them. That's why we're providing \$8,000 for people who are going off the wait-list to be able to buy services, and subsequently providing access to a new ABA program that's more intense, that's longer and is specifically tailored to those older children—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: I haven't got an answer on why the government is kicking children off the wait-list. The government's changes will lead to children falling through the cracks of an already underfunded system. You can't stop these programs without something to replace it with.

Parents are telling you that autism does not stop at age five. I—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I would hope that I would not have to be interrupted while I'm speaking. I would also hope that I don't have to repeat yesterday's need for control. This will be the last time I speak—as a group.

Leader.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Parents are telling the government and stressing that autism does not stop at age five, but the government isn't listening. How are these parents, these families living with autism, going to be heard? Do they have to buy a \$6,000-a-plate dinner to get a meeting with the Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader, come to order, please. The member from Oxford, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Let me just say off the bat that this government listens to families, this government listens to experts, and we listen to service providers. We did this before the announcement. We did it—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain, come to order. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, come to order. If it continues, I'll ramp it up to warnings.

Minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I continue to meet with families who have children on the autism spectrum scale. I hear from them all the time. I met with more yesterday.

Speaker, I know change is hard. I'm a mother of a child with special needs. I know what it's like when programs transition. But I'm very proud to say that the families who are going to experience change under our new and enhanced program will get the services they need when they need them.

Yes, there will be \$8,000 that goes towards any services a family wishes to buy immediately. That will

immediately move kids off the wait-list. It's three times more than what was provided under the old—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. Two things: First of all, I'm sitting in the chair and I will do my job. I don't need people from that side, or any side, telling me how to do it, because if I was ready to do something, you just stopped it from happening.

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The Minister of Energy is a prolific fundraiser for the Liberal Party, because he needs to meet his cabinet seat quota—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am now moving to warnings. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, we appear to have hit a nerve once again.

It is reported that the Minister of Energy's fundraising target was as high as \$300,000. That's not an easy task for anyone. Some could raise that money through—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Deputy House leader will stop raising his prop. Thank you.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Some could raise that money through hard work, or maybe the minister found other ways.

1050

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier tell us, has any Minister of Energy solicited donations for the Ontario Liberal Party from companies seeking grants or contracts with the government of Ontario? Yes or no? It's not a complicated question. Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. As he knows and as I've said, our government has already undertaken a number of initiatives to make our elections more accountable and transparent. In 2007, we introduced third-party advertising rules for the first time. We introduced real-time disclosure for political donations. I announced last June that we're committed to making further changes. As I announced yesterday, our government plans on introducing legislation on political donations this spring and moving to ban corporate and union donations.

I think we have to lead by example, and that's why I've made the decision to immediately cancel the upcoming private fundraisers that I attend. I've also asked the same of my ministers.

I think it's important that we get this right. Everyone in this House is part of the current set of rules. We need to get this right. That's why I've invited both party

leaders to join me for a meeting within the next few days to discuss these important issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: That wasn't the question I asked. I'm hoping that this time I can get an answer about how the Premier's ministers are conducting themselves.

Let me give an example. Seven renewable energy companies donated \$255,000 to the Liberal Party over the last few years. All seven of those companies were awarded contracts from the Ministry of Energy just a couple of weeks ago. How can the Liberal Party, how can this government possibly claim that their decisions were impartial and fair when seven of those companies gave over a quarter of a million dollars to the Liberal Party's coffers? Would all of those contracts have been approved if it wasn't for a quarter of a million dollars in donations to the Liberal Party? It's unconscionable.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You just heard the Premier say that she has determined that she will cancel all private fundraisers going forward. I think if you look at your calendar, on April 19, you will see that there's a scheduled \$10,000-a-plate exclusive dinner. I believe it's at the Albany Club.

So let me ask the Leader of the Opposition: Is he prepared to follow the Premier's lead and cancel all future fundraising events? You can take out your eraser and take out that April 19 event right now. Show the leadership.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I'd appreciate if we don't deflect questions and I can get an answer to my question about the donations to the Liberal Party that resulted in contracts.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very good timing.

Mr. Patrick Brown: We in the opposition are not awarding contracts. It is the government. The crux of the problem is that donors are feeling, the fundraisers are feeling that to have the ear of government, that any group has to donate to the Liberal Party. That is not how you conduct the business of the people of Ontario. That's not how you award contracts.

Let me give another example of how this line has been completely blurred between the Liberal Party and the government of Ontario. Mr. David Thornton, who happens to be the largest donor of the seven companies and used to be employed by the Ministry of Energy, has donated 194 times, giving over \$100,000—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Suck and blow.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What kind of language is that, Speaker? What kind of language is that? We're House representatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would wish that the member was very anxious to curb himself. Moving to warnings might not do it; there are lots of votes today.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that he has never accepted donations from people or organizations who want them to oppose government policy—for example, the ORPP—I think I'd like to hear that coming from the Leader of the Opposition.

Speaker, if he's not prepared to cancel the April 19 fundraiser at the Albany Club—\$10,000 a plate for 10 corporate executive types—I wonder about May 4? I understand there's another fundraiser on May 4—a bargain at \$5,000 per plate—at Barberian's.

So, Speaker, whether it's the Albany Club event or the Barberian's event, I ask the Leader of the Opposition: If you really mean what you say, you will follow the Premier's lead and cancel your corporate fundraisers coming up.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Does the Premier believe that it should be one party, the Liberal Party, and one party leader, her, that should be responsible for making the rules that govern how all election campaigns are funded?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said yesterday and have said again this morning, I think that we do need to get this right. I've invited both party leaders to join me, to talk with their colleagues to bring advice to us, but we are going to bring forward legislation this spring. We are going to move to ban corporate and union donations. I look forward to the public debate that will ensue when that legislation is introduced. Before that, I look forward to input from the leaders of the opposition parties.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians deserve to have faith in the democratic process and in our shared political system. I believe that the Premier putting herself in charge of making the rules that govern political campaigns is just wrong. Using the government's majority to force through changes on how our democracy is financed will only lead to more public cynicism. That's why it's important to take the politics out of this process and put Ontario's non-partisan Chief Electoral Officer in charge.

Will the Premier do the right thing and ask the Chief Electoral Officer to head up this process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I very much respect the advice of the Chief Electoral Officer—the member op-

posite knows there are recommendations that have come forward, and we're looking at all of those.

But on the issues we're discussing today, particularly the banning of corporate and union donations, I think there is pretty widespread agreement that that's where we should go. That's why we're going to introduce legislation this spring. I look forward to input from the opposition leaders, and I expect that the opposition leaders will talk with their colleagues and with other people and bring that advice.

Of course, there will be a very broad public discussion once the legislation is introduced. That's why we have moved the date of the introduction of the legislation up from the fall to the spring, so that we can have a good opportunity for the committee to talk to people around the province and have an opportunity to hear from people in every corner of the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When people believe there is one level of access for wealthy donors and another level of access for ordinary Ontarians, it's bad for our democracy and it makes people cynical. When people see the same Premier who took advantage of those lax rules now in charge of drafting the new rules, they become even more cynical.

1100

Will this Premier commit today to creating a process that is not led by her office and Liberal political staffers, and instead is led by Elections Ontario together with academia, civil society, business, labour and all major political parties?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said last June, I believe there need to be changes. That's why we're bringing legislation forward. There's been a broad discussion.

If we look at the federal government, we see that there has been a change there for some years banning corporate and union donations. I think there is a broad consensus that that's the direction that we need to go.

I am absolutely open to hearing from people across the province. That's why I want to get the legislation introduced so that we can get that commentary, Mr. Speaker. As the leader of the third party knows, we hear from people all the time. I talk to people all the time across the province. I listen to people and then we make decisions based on that input and based on what we believe is in the best interests of the people of the province. That's how we will move forward, bringing legislation in the spring.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said she's "open to an open process," but she also said that everybody makes suggestions to her—in fact, she just said that again this morning—then she goes away and sets the rules, and they're passed by a Liberal majority, no matter what the opposition, civil society, academics, business or labour

have to say. That's not an open process; it's not democratic. Will this Premier do the right thing and listen to her own advice and make this an open process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I believe that we have an open process, Mr. Speaker. I believe that having legislation where there has been input from the opposition leaders, where there has already been a public discussion about this issue, where there seems to be a consensus on some very fundamental aspects, and then a broad discussion—I would say to the leaders of the opposition that they have an opportunity to bring forward, into the public realm—because they can talk with me about it in the meeting but obviously they will want to talk publicly about what it is they would like to see changed, what they would like to see the parameters to be around the new fundraising rules. That is, I think, important for this process—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —is that they engage in a real way in this conversation, because there are no absolutes here.

The fundraising rules have been changed from generation to generation. Every party in this House has been in office and has contributed to the design of fundraising rules at one time or another. This is the next iteration. I look forward to their input, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It wasn't that long ago that the Premier was promising an open process on the budget, but instead of listening to Ontarians through a pre-budget process, we got a Liberal government public relations exercise. The minister sent the already-written budget to translation before the pre-budget hearings had actually even finished. Now, it's déjà vu all over again. It's clear that the Premier didn't take the budget consultations seriously. I'm concerned that she's going to do the same on this very issue.

Will this Premier take this process out of her office and put Ontario's non-partisan Chief Electoral Officer in charge?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've said what our intention is. We will bring forward legislation in the spring. We will have a broad public discussion. I look forward to the leaders of the opposition parties bringing their commentary forward.

Let's talk about the budget. Let's talk about the budget that the leader of the third party has said she will be proud to vote against.

Let's talk about whom we listen to and the input that we got on something like the free tuition. The Ontario university student association, the Canadian Federation of Students and the college student association all said to us that we need to target the support—

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —target the student assistance supports for low- and middle-income families. That's exactly what we have done, Mr. Speaker. That input, we heard over many months, and it found its way into the budget.

I'd like to talk about the environmentalists who have talked to us for years about cap-and-trade, about the system that is going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wrap up, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have listened to them, and that is part of our budget and part of our strategy going forward. That is what the leader of the third party is proud to vote against.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: And I would do it again, Speaker. I would do it again.

Yesterday, the Premier said she was already working on the changes to how campaigns are funded, long before any consultation. What that says to me is that the Premier is planning unilateral changes. Frankly, Ontarians have a right to be concerned that these changes will be more about strengthening the Liberal Party than Ontario's democracy.

It is not too late for the Premier of this province to do the right thing: to ask the Chief Electoral Officer to head up a truly non-partisan, non-politicized process and ensure Ontarians that this is not, once again, all about her and the Liberal Party. Will this Premier do the right thing and open up this process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said today, it is very important that we get this right. I announced yesterday that our government plans on bringing the legislation forward—not in the fall, but in the spring—and will move to banning corporate and union donations. I said this morning that I've made a decision to immediately cancel upcoming private fundraisers that I have attended in the past, and I've asked the same of my ministers.

It is important that we get this right and it is important that all of the voices are heard. There is a high degree of consensus on some of the issues, like the banning of union and corporate donations. But I am very eager to hear from the leaders of the opposition parties on what they are hearing and what they think should be in these changes. So far, I really haven't heard any substantial recommendations coming from them. I look forward to our meeting. I hope we'll have a good, constructive conversation.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last week, as soon as the news broke that children with autism over five years old would no longer receive intensive behavioural intervention, I started hearing from families who were devastated by the minister and her broken promise: families like the Sturgeons, whose son Daniel turned five this past November and has been on a waiting list for two years. Now the minister has removed Daniel from the wait-list because he's five. Just imagine how devastating that is, to be so close to receiving this necessary support and then having it ripped away from you.

Families like the Sturgeons just don't trust you to do the right thing. Will the minister do the right thing today and reverse her decision to remove children like Daniel from accessing IBI therapy?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think it's important to note that the \$333 million is entirely for new services and programs for children. Let's not lose sight of that.

Applause.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you.

As the Premier mentioned, the program also involves creating 16,000 new spaces for children to receive the therapies they need in the appropriate developmental window. As children over five transition off the IBI wait-list, they will receive more services under the new integrated autism program.

We're going to work directly with families to work on transition planning to make sure they get the services they need, and there will be new diagnosis pilots as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The minister wants to talk about other issues. I want to talk about the children over five who have been removed from a waiting list. You made great hay talking about how there were going to be no more wait-lists. I don't think anybody thought "no more wait-lists" would mean "you're off."

Another family: The MacIsaacs' son Dale was diagnosed with autism in June—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come to order.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: These are real families. It's not a laughing matter.

Another family, the MacIsaacs: Their son Dale was diagnosed with autism in June 2013. Dale turned six on April 2. Now there's no hope for him to receive IBI therapy from the province. Giving \$8,000 to the MacIsaacs to find their own solution while this family is currently paying over \$16,000 per year for eight hours of therapy—when will the minister provide real support for families with children with autism?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Well, Speaker, I think \$330 million is real money; it is real support.

The cost of inaction is too high. We know that prevalence rates are up. The wait-lists are far too high, and if we do nothing, those wait-lists will go from one or two years—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: —to five years by 2018. That's unacceptable to me; that's unacceptable to this government. We will provide direct support to families wherever they are in this journey to the new program.

1110

If the member is asking me—that we should make changes, further changes—I think what she's suggesting is that it prevents children under the age of five from receiving the intervention when they need it most. Clinical experts have advised us about the appropriate developmental window—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You're pitting families against each other. I'm not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon is warned.

You have a wrap-up sentence.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's also important to note that the one-time funding for—families who have children over the age of five coming off the list will receive enhanced ABA support when that \$8,000 expires. There'll be more support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Can the minister tell Ontarians if major donors to your party get special treatment?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We listened to the people of Ontario on all matters pertaining to the development of policy. They're the ones that are important in the development of this budget. We also listened to the members of the opposition and the standing committee when they did their review. A lot of that is incorporated into this budget. That's what we listened to, that's what's important and that's what we'll continue to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: In 2015, EllisDon contributed more than \$24,000 to the Ontario Liberal Party. In 2015, the Liberal budget—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, you're warned.

Finish, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: In 2015, the Liberals' Budget Measures Act changed the Labour Relations Act to specifically help one single employer: EllisDon. Nobody else was asking for it, and it didn't help any other businesses.

Now, the year before, the Premier backed off a previous deal to support a private member's bill that would have done the exact same thing, which does leave one wondering: Did the money make the difference? I'm sure the minister can see why some people might be skeptical.

Can the minister explain to the people of this province what happened here?

Hon. Charles Sousa: What is happening is that members of the opposition have fundraisers. What is happening is that they receive donations from the very same people. I have a list here of NDP donations, as well as the corporations and the unions that they receive funding from. It is happening, and we are looking at changing that.

We ask the members of the opposition to stop their fundraisers as well, as the Premier is doing right now.

REFUGEES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international, the Honourable Michael Chan.

To our guests in the upper gallery: Salam alaikum. Marhaba. Ahlan wa Sahlan.

Speaker, I wanted to let the youngest of our visitors know that they no longer have to sleep under their beds here in Canada, as many continue to do in order to avoid being bombed or shelled.

Ontario has welcomed over 14,000 refugees as part of the federal effort to bring 25,000 Syrians to Canada. I am humbled, honoured, grateful and proud of the province of Ontario, under Premier Wynne, as well as Prime Minister Trudeau, for the open and genuine welcome extended to these newest of Canadians. In addition, we've provided funding to support Lifeline Syria's effort to help resettle refugees from the Syrian conflict in the GTA through private sponsorship.

Would the minister describe for this House what Ontario is doing to support refugee resettlement in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Etobicoke North for asking the question. I also want to welcome the newcomers from the Syrian conflict to Ontario and to Canada. They are one of us.

At the same time, I want to thank the great work done by the settlement services agency called COSTI. They have done great work.

Ontario has supported, and continues to support, refugees and other vulnerable people from all over the world. That's why, last year, we announced \$8.5 million to support the travel, arrival, settlement and integration of refugees in Ontario. We also committed \$2 million for international aid. Ontario has allocated over \$6 million to enhance sponsorship supports and resettlement services in targeted communities.

Speaker, we are proud of the work that we have done so far.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: As an MPP and MD, I was disheartened and disturbed when the former Harper government cut health care services for refugees in Canada, who, as you will know, are some of the most vulnerable people on the planet. In fact, it is a matter of public record that the Leader of the Opposition, in an earlier incarnation, voted to cut federal refugee health care.

Health professionals saw the suffering caused by these unilateral cuts, and even the Supreme Court of Canada called the cuts "cruel and unusual."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And your question on government policy is?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Our government reinstated access to these essential health care services for refugee claimants through the Ontario Temporary Health Pro-

gram. Ontario has always been a place that stands up for people fleeing from war, famine and persecution.

Would the minister please inform this chamber about our government's health care for refugees and new Canadians here in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I would also like to welcome our guests here today. Ahlan wa Sahlan. Salam alaikum. Marhaba.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to announce that as of last Friday, April 1, the federal government fully restored the refugee health program, which was, as we know, drastically cut in 2012.

To date, our province has welcomed over 14,000 Syrian refugees here in Ontario. That's something that we all should be proud of, and we can share credit for welcoming these individuals.

At the Ministry of Health, we're working with all our health care providers, with a range of partners, with our community service organizations, to ensure that, together with our federal government, all the proper health supports are provided for our new guests to this country.

Welcome again. I'm so proud to be here with them this morning.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. During the latest round of wind and solar procurements, the Liberals gave contracts to seven major companies. These companies donated more than a quarter of a million dollars over the past few years alone.

This all comes while the Auditor General has said we don't need to be procuring more energy. We're already on pace to export 52 million megawatts over the next five years, which is enough to power Nova Scotia until 2020.

Will the Premier admit that these renewable contracts aren't signed because Ontario needs the power, but that they're just the Liberal Party's way of paying back the quarter of a million favours these companies have done for them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: To be frank, I thought the member opposite was better than that. The innuendo in that question, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely inappropriate. When I think about it—I mean, we could send the same thing back to them. We won't, because we're going to be above that.

This process has a fairness commissioner involved in it that oversees every one of these contracts. It is completely unfettered when it comes to any kind of politicization of these types of contracts. They're administered through a process. They're done through the Independent Electricity System Operator. The member has been a critic for energy. He knows that.

That's an unfair innuendo, and I think the member should be embarrassed by even making that allegation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: I'm not embarrassed, but that answer certainly should embarrass you.

The Premier can deflect from the real reasons these unnecessary contracts are being signed, but we all know she's just paying it forward. After all, her Minister of Energy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now the member is getting too close to the line. I want to guard him against making a comment that impugns the motive. The member will reword that.

1120

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Minister of Energy has to meet a \$300,000-a-year quota. What better way to meet the quota than to hand out government contracts to his favourite donors? Yet three companies, Enerfin, SWEB Development and Innergex—wind companies who applied for contracts—got none. Coincidentally, they never made a single donation to the Liberal Party.

How can the Premier claim this is an impartial process when the companies that don't donate get nothing and companies that donate a quarter of a million dollars get signed lucrative contracts—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the only thing that is substantive in his question is smear and innuendo.

The fact is the large renewable procurement process is administered by the Independent Electricity System Operator. It's completely arm's-length and completely non-political. The member should know that because he's a critic, but he can't help himself. He has to get into innuendo; he has to get into smear, and I think that's beneath them. I think the member—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let's be very clear. All of the contracts that come through this process are public. They're circulated publicly, and all of the donations he's referring to are public. This is nothing but empty innuendo. As I said, it's very much beneath the dignity of that member.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre du Travail. Does the minister believe that workers should have the right to choose their union freely?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: In the province of Ontario, we have a history of labour negotiations and a Labour Relations Act that has served this province well. I think the tenet that the member across has just described is one that is shared by all members of this House.

As we're going through the Changing Workplaces Review with the advisers, we're taking a look at the

Labour Relations Act. We have an open period in construction that serves this province well.

To summarize my answer, I would have to say yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: In 2015, the Service Employees International Union, better known as SEIU, contributed more than \$30,000 to the Ontario Liberal Party. In previous years, SEIU contributed even more money to the Liberal Party, and in 2015, Bill 109 was introduced and became law. Bill 109 made changes to our labour law that specifically helped SEIU.

Other unions in the sector say that Bill 109 is not fair, and they are hoping to defeat it through a charter test. Some skeptics might be wondering what was going on. Can the minister shed some light on that process?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, that's a bit of a stretch, to say the least.

What has happened is that when we have a merger of organizations, often there are bargaining unions attached to each of the organizations that merge. What happened is that some members of the labour movement came forward and said, "Is there a better way of doing this? Is there an easier way of doing this that doesn't cause as much strife and unrest as that transition is taking place for the implementation of a first contract?"

Some members of organized labour were on this side of the bill; other members of organized labour were on that side of the bill. We listened to both. We introduced legislation in this House. We're still listening to both parties as to ascertaining what number of people should apply in the regulation that follows from this. This is a perfect example of government listening to organizations that bring good ideas before it, having the proper debate in this House and bringing forward strong legislation.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question today is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services—and, Speaker, you'll be pleased to know it has nothing to do with the \$1.6 million that the Leader of the Opposition raised from his corporate friends in his leadership campaign.

The 2016 Ontario budget commits our government to many programs that will make life easier for all Ontarians. I know that ServiceOntario will play an important role in this by making front-line services easier to access, more reliable and more affordable. While many people prefer having one-on-one, person-to-person contact in transactions, it's essential that our government evolve with technology to provide good online services.

This budget announced that it will enhance customer experiences at ServiceOntario.

Speaker, would the minister please share with this House, my constituents of Beaches–East York and my mother who's here on her birthday today in the west gallery his plans to improve the delivery of government services for Ontarians?

Hon. David Orazietti: I'll start by wishing the member from Beaches–East York's mother a very happy

birthday. I also want to thank him for the question. I'm pleased at the progress we're making through ServiceOntario to continue to modernize services that Ontarians count on.

As the budget emphasized, ServiceOntario is transforming and improving service delivery by increasing access to a wide range of services. In the past four years, customer interactions at retail contact centres have increased by 8.6%, and 4.1% in the last year alone, bringing it to 49 million transactions. This creates a need for us to match the growing demand at our 300 retail centres by increasing online availability. That's why we're working to develop an online renewal option for health cards in Ontario. We're also planning to align how Ontarians change their address for both health cards and driver's licences.

I'm pleased with the progress we're making, and I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the minister. We know he's doing tremendous hard work in the ministry to improve services. We expect modern service delivery and our government has shown this leadership, so working with customers and stakeholders to provide more services online has been a priority. This allows Ontarians to spend less time in lineups and more time with their loved ones. Businesses also expect that government services will be delivered efficiently and reliably, and they appreciate the convenience of online services provided by ServiceOntario.

I understand, Minister, that these steps are being taken while we are also ensuring that the new services are fiscally responsible and will protect an individual's private information.

Speaker, would the minister please update the House on the many steps that his ministry has taken to increase access to online services for Ontarians while ensuring their privacy?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again, to the member from Beaches-East York: Thank you for the question.

As the member mentioned, the ServiceOntario commitments that we've made as part of the budget were part of an extensive ongoing effort to improve access to convenient, safe and secure online services.

ServiceOntario completes 10.5 million online transactions every year, offering more than 40 services online such as driver's licence renewals, licence plate sticker renewals, newborn registrations, address changes, vehicle information packages and, of course, birth certificates. Parents can now register their child's birth and apply for a social insurance number, a certificate and other benefits in a four-in-one package. And in 2013, we became the first province in the country to provide drivers with an online renewal service.

With the rapid expansion of these programs, we're constantly monitoring security measures as well. With the use of our 24/7 security operations centre, we're ensuring that the sensitive information of Ontarians is securely protected. I look forward to building on the progress that we're making.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, the minister gave a vague answer to my question about dealings he and his office had with stakeholders when it comes to political donations and access.

Based on the minister's comments last week and the Premier's new agenda, I can see why he was squirming. Last week's *Globe and Mail* headline stated, "Sousa defends secret ... fundraiser as 'part of democratic process.'" Now he's been called out publicly and his tune is suddenly different.

My question is, where in the minister's mandate letter does it state that part of his job requirement is to raise \$500,000 a year for the Liberal Party?

Hon. Charles Sousa: My mandate letter is very, very public and the work I do is very public. In fact, it's written in a document that expresses the values and the priorities of Ontarians of all stripes, of all ages and of all levels. Be it in corporate, be it in academics, be it in hospitals, be it children, be it unions, or be it professionals, all the people of Ontario are represented in the document. That's a document that matters. That's a document that that member is opposing.

He's opposing supports for more hospitals. He's opposing more supports for more education. He's opposing free tuition for the most vulnerable in our society. That is what concerns us. That is our priority. That is what we're moving forward. That's what's in my mandate letter.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the minister: Hopefully I'll get an actual answer to this question.

Here are his words as quoted by the *Globe* and the *Toronto Star*: "It's not something that I have been concerned about," and "I don't worry about fundraising." Really? No concern about organizing a secret \$7,500-a-plate funder last year, in which the banks that profited from the privatization of Hydro One helped him raise about \$165,000? Executives representing several financial services firms that were part of the Hydro One syndicate were also there, according to the emails obtained by the *Globe* and *Mail*.

Is the minister really going to stand there and insist that cabinet access hasn't been sold through the Ministry of Finance office?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Premier has made it very clear, and I've advised my campaign staff, that we are to cancel all private fundraisers, as we believe the member of the opposition should as well. We ask: Are you going to now cancel your April 19 private and exclusive fundraiser at the Albany Club? Cancel that. Are you going to cancel your May 4 exclusive \$5,000-per-head fundraiser at Barberian's? Are you going to do that? We believe you should, and we will as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You won't know when I'm going to strike.

New question?

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Last week, the government announced that it was reducing the wait-list for autism treatment by kicking children five years and older off the list. Families and kids who have been languishing on wait-lists for years because of this government's inaction and misplaced priorities are now being told that they will never access the service that they have been waiting so long for. In some cases, they are being denied just weeks after being told that they have been finally approved for services. It's disgraceful. Families came to Queen's Park to talk about their life on the wait-list, and this government responds by kicking them off that list. It's absolutely shameful.

Will the Premier admit she is failing families of kids with ASD and immediately grandfather all children currently on the wait-list at the time of their announcement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's important to note, by making these changes, we're actually taking children off the IBI wait-list. We're giving them immediate support with the \$8,000 and transitioning them to an enhanced ABA program. We're doing that. That will, as I said before, create 16,000 new therapy spaces.

I do want to thank the member for the question. However, it is important to note that in November of just last year, she said study after study shows that early intervention is critical for children with autism. We agree with that. We're following the evidence. The evidence shows that children receiving the services in the right developmental window is important.

I know the member opposite also asked us to reduce wait-lists and get kids the services they need as soon as possible, so that's what our investment of a new \$333 million will do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: This government allowed that list to grow out of control and now they want kids to pay the price for it. More than 8,000 parents have signed an online petition begging this government to reverse its decision. My office has received literally hundreds of emails from families who are completely devastated by the news. I'm going to send over the many letters that I have received to the Premier and the minister.

If the minister thinks that she is doing the right thing, she should respond personally to each family. Parents who were told weeks ago that their kids were ideal candidates all of a sudden are being kicked off the list.

Will the Premier explain to families of kids with ASD why she doesn't think their kids deserve access to life-changing treatment?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I have been talking with families, and I understand that change and transition can be difficult. But as far as I'm concerned, as the Ontario Minister of Children and Youth Services, the cost of doing nothing is far too high. We've been investing heavily—\$190,000 a year in autism—but the prevalence rates are higher, Speaker—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: One hundred and ninety million.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: —\$190 million a year; thank you—and the wait-lists are high, so we need to address that.

Speaker, if the opposition doesn't want to hear from me about this, let's hear what the experts say. The executive director for Autism Ontario said, "Families raising children with autism have been waiting a long time for this announcement. Providing early, evidence-based intervention, when it matters most, will set children with autism on the best path forward."

Let's hear from the Regional Autism Providers of Ontario. They said, "We are very excited about what this historic investment means for children and youth with autism and their families. More families will receive the right services at the right time."

And there are others, Speaker.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Minister, this side of the House is very proud of agriculture's contribution to Ontario's economy, generating over 781,000 jobs and over \$35 billion in GDP each and every year.

Ontarians also know that when they buy local food, they help to create jobs and economic growth in communities all across this province. In my riding of Barrie, we benefit from several agri-food businesses that are innovating and attracting a growing clientele.

Could the minister please inform the House on how—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've been standing for quite some time because I wanted to get the attention of somebody else on the other side.

I believe the minister has heard the question, but you can have one sentence to wrap up, please.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Could the minister please inform the House on how the government recognizes the work that is being carried out by food producers and processors to innovate and compete both locally and globally?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Barrie for her question this morning. I do know that, in

the Barrie area, she's a champion of the farmers in that area.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, Ontario's agri-food sector is among the most innovative in the world. That's why, in 2006, we announced the launch of the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence to help foster innovation in Ontario's agriculture and food sector.

To date, more than 475 award-winning initiatives have been recognized by our government. These innovative projects are boosting the agri-food sector by adding value to existing products, helping to create jobs, and contributing to economic growth. Award recipients are eligible to receive prizes from \$5,000 to \$75,000, grants that can go towards further investment in their agri-food businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm glad to see that our province is celebrating the agri-food sector's job creation and economic growth potential.

In 2014, I had the opportunity to hand an award to Barrie Hill Farms, which started a trial to freeze and sell surplus asparagus spears. Businesses and individuals like these are contributing to the Premier's growth challenge to the agri-food sector to double its growth rate and create 120,000 jobs by the year 2020. I have no doubt that the individuals and businesses in my riding would be interested in applying for these great awards. Can the minister please provide another example of last year's recipients, and whether Ontarians can apply for the agri-food innovation awards for this year?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thank the member from Barrie for her supplementary question. I know that, in the weeks to come, she'll be joining her farmers out in the fields to see how we start the crop-growing season for 2016.

Last year, we handed out about 50 agri-food awards across the province. Last November, the Premier joined me in recognizing the top award winner, the Van Groningen family in Simcoe county, who created their own training program to provide nine students with the skills they needed for the operations of VG Meats, whose products can be purchased at Longo's and other retail operations across the province of Ontario.

1140

I'm pleased to inform the House that we're handing out the Premier's awards again this year, but time is running out. You've got to apply before 5 p.m. on Friday, April 15. I encourage all members to reach out to their innovative agri-food businesses in their riding and apply immediately.

DRIVE CLEAN

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the finance minister. Speaker, the Liberals were caught four years ago using the Drive Clean program to rake in massive multi-million dollar profits. The Auditor General specifically warned the Liberal government that it could not claim Drive Clean was revenue-neutral while using the program to make money. But that's exactly what the

Liberals did. In fact, the Auditor General reported the government would generate \$50 million in profits by the end of the current Drive Clean contract.

My simple question to the minister is this: What was the total surplus the government generated from the Drive Clean program from 2011 to 2016?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question; I know we've had this one before. We have moved to have a cost recovery of the program as is necessary. That's what we admitted to and that will proceed, unlike what the member opposite's party had introduced initially, which created excess revenues. We've curbed that activity and we made it cost-neutral.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, it's very disappointing that this finance minister struggles to even answer a simple question he should have the number for. So let's try again.

The Liberals have generated millions of dollars in profits from the Drive Clean program, which the Auditor General pointed out is an unlawful tax and must be paid back to Ontario drivers. Yet the Liberals have not followed the Auditor General's recommendation. Instead, they are continuing the Drive Clean program and will likely pay for it using the profits they've accumulated.

Again, Speaker, will the minister disclose the total surplus and explain whether the government plans to use the money it overcharged Ontario drivers to pay for Drive Clean for the next two years?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of the Environment, Speaker.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, as the member may know, there are actually going to be no charges for the Drive Clean program because, in the budget, we eliminated it.

Mr. Speaker, only the Conservatives could see the elimination of a fee as somehow costing people something, but their math has never been that good.

Second, it's interesting. This is a very successful program. I get lobbied by businesses and people in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, we get lobbied by many other provinces. Quebec does not have a Drive Clean program, Mr. Speaker. The problem Quebec has is that old cars are dumped into the Quebec market, increasing their carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions.

This program is very well regarded internationally. My ministry gets many requests to help other jurisdictions introduce such a dynamic and effective program.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Before I ask it, I just want to acknowledge that Shannon Bertrand, the young paramedic who came into my office about PTSD and kicked this whole thing off about eight years ago, has joined us in the House. To all of our first responders here, I just want to say thank you.

While I'm thrilled that there is recognition that first responders in this province experience post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of what they experience on the job, I'm of course disappointed that many groups of front-line workers are still excluded from Bill 163. The original iteration—my bill—talked about all workers.

Can the minister tell me why he didn't stand up for one group in particular, front-line nurses, to recognize that nurses experience PTSD on the job?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for this question.

Speaker, when this idea was first discussed around these halls, the idea was to pass a bill that really only protected firefighters, protected police officers and protected paramedics. It excluded corrections officers; it excluded dispatchers; it excluded First Nations people.

What we did is we went through an exhaustive exercise with these groups. We consulted. We talked to people that were coming to speak to us from the associations, many of whom are represented here today. They told us to move ahead, that this had taken far too long and that it was time to take those steps forward.

In corrections, we've included nurses. We've looked at our first responders, who are twice as likely to get PTSD as anybody else in this province, and we've moved ahead to include them. That's what the people in the audience have asked us to do: to pass this bill. That's exactly what I hope we do about five minutes from now.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to welcome a group from my riding, with their teacher Joseph Wong: the West Hill ESL Centre. Please welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches—East York on a point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: My mother wasn't in the House when we had introductions earlier. I would like to wish her a happy birthday today. We're going to go have lunch in the Legislature. Dawn Potts, welcome to Queen's Park.

DEFERRED VOTES

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S FIRST RESPONDERS ACT (POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER), 2016

LOI DE 2016 D'APPUI AUX PREMIERS INTERVENANTS DE L'ONTARIO (ÉTAT DE STRESS POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with

respect to posttraumatic stress disorder / *Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail et la Loi sur le ministère du Travail relativement à l'état de stress post-traumatique.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1151.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members please take their seats.

On April 5, 2016, Mr. Flynn moved third reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Paul
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Moridi, Reza
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia
Baker, Yvan	Hatfield, Percy	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hillier, Randy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Barrett, Toby	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Brown, Patrick	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Campbell, Sarah	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Jones, Sylvia	Rinaldi, Lou
Clark, Steve	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Coe, Lorne	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Scott, Laurie
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Fedeli, Victor	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fife, Catherine	McGarry, Kathryn	Wilson, Jim
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor	Wong, Soo
Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
French, Jennifer K.	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yurek, Jeff

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 96; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

WASTE-FREE ONTARIO ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS DÉCHETS

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur la récupération des ressources et l'économie circulaire et la Loi transitoire de 2016 sur le réacheminement des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 151. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1155 to 1156.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On February 16, 2016, Mr. Murray moved second reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002.

Mr. Fraser has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Fraser's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hoggarth, Ann	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczeck, Helena	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Naqvi, Yasir
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Oraziotti, David
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Potts, Arthur
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	
Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	Hillier, Randy	Singh, Jagmeet
Brown, Patrick	Horwath, Andrea	Smith, Todd
Campbell, Sarah	Hudak, Tim	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	Jones, Sylvia	Taylor, Monique
Coe, Lorne	MacLaren, Jack	Thompson, Lisa M.
DiNovo, Cheri	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fedeli, Victor	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Fife, Catherine	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
French, Jennifer K.	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 44.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Murray has moved second reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular

Economy Act, 2016 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a "no."

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats?

Mr. Murray has moved second reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2015 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2015 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gretzky, Lisa	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Bisson, Gilles	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Jaczeck, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Rinaldi, Lou
Campbell, Sarah	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Lalonde, Marie-France	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Coteau, Michael	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Del Duca, Steven	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Taylor, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Duguid, Brad	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McGarry, Kathryn	Wilson, Jim
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Eleanor	Wong, Soo
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fraser, John	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
French, Jennifer K.	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yurek, Jeff
Gates, Wayne	Milczyn, Peter Z.	
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 94; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Social policy committee, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHARLIE GUY

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise to celebrate the life of Charlie Guy and the remarkable event he and his family created. Brockville lost one of its most community-minded citizens when Charlie passed away on February 16. Diagnosed with prostate cancer in the 1990s, Charlie won that battle, but it was a close call, so he decided to help other men at risk. With his wonderful wife, Kay, his daughters Cathy and Carol, and their families, he teed up what would become the Care and Share golf tournament.

The first event at their family-owned Brockville Highland Golf Club was held in 1999. Over 12 years, they raised an incredible \$600,000 for prostate cancer research. The tournament also saved lives by raising awareness for men over 50 to get a PSA test. In 2011, the tournament's beneficiary became our beloved Brockville Cardiovascular Program. Over five years, the event raised \$310,000 more.

It's important to note that Charlie never asked for a dime in green fees all those years. Every cent raised went to the charities. After losing their dad, Carol and Cathy recently made the difficult decision that last year was the tournament's final round. But we all understand that after so many years of giving, it's time to put family first. Besides, it just wouldn't be the same without Charlie, Mr. Care and Share himself, there to welcome all of us to the Highland.

On behalf of the entire community, I extend my deepest condolences to Kay, Cathy, Carol and family. You should be so proud to know the legacy you helped Charlie leave is one that won't be forgotten.

FIRE IN PIKANGIKUM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: On behalf of the people of Kenora—Rainy River, I would like to extend my deepest sorrow and heartbreak to the community of Pikangikum, who lost a family of nine to a house fire this last week. The impact of this tragedy was felt across the province, where people everywhere reacted with horror and heartache. Vigils were held in communities across the riding, and the community of Sandy Lake in particular rallied together to deliver a truckload of donations to help the people of Pikangikum.

While the cause of the fire is still being investigated, what is already known is that in many First Nations communities, many are left without basic fire suppression equipment such as fire trucks, and they lack enough trained volunteers and have no 911 service. Inadequate housing with severe overcrowding serves to further compound these issues.

In the case of Pikangikum, where 95% of the homes don't have running water, there is a fire truck but the roads were in such terrible condition that, tragically, the truck did not make it to the fire. Speaker, we cannot sit idly by and watch while these deaths needlessly occur. We can't blame other levels of government or continue the legacy of stalling and delaying.

When listening to members of the community as well as NAN Grand Chief Fiddler and Ontario Regional Chief Day, we know the work that needs to be done. Ontarians across this province are looking to this government and to this Premier to act boldly to create a safe and fair society for all Ontarians.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: This past Saturday on April 2, and on the 11th anniversary of his passing, Ontarians across the province celebrated the life and legacy of Saint John Paul II.

As a Polish Canadian and someone whose family hails from Wadowice, Poland, the birthplace of Karol Jozef Wojtyla, I'm especially proud that Ontario became the first jurisdiction in Canada to officially proclaim a special holiday to annually honour the legacy of one of the greatest spiritual leaders of our time.

It was particularly special when my colleague MPP Damerla passed a bill in this House before John Paul II's canonization so that we were able to celebrate both the province's first Pope John Paul II Day and his becoming a saint.

Saint John Paul II was a universal figure whose lasting legacy is marked by his strong commitment to peace, equality, human rights and multi-faith dialogue and understanding. As a young man, Saint John Paul II lived in a world divided. He dedicated his life and pontificate to piecing it back together. His efforts ranged from the small and humble to the profound and historic. He served as a beacon of hope especially for millions of youth who were encouraged by his message of faith and activism. He visited Ontario and Toronto twice and he was the key instrumental figure in Communism's downfall.

No other pope of the modern era has had greater spiritual and political impact. This is the legacy Ontario commemorates every April 2.

ONTARIO BIOSCIENCE INNOVATION
ORGANIZATION

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to recognize a non-profit group that has a unique approach to engaging in the development of a health innovation economy for Ontario.

Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization, also known as OBIO, has struck an MPP Health Science Caucus made up of MPPs from all three parties. We meet on a regular basis to discuss ways to grow our health science economy and to enhance our health technology's treatments and services, all of which present an excellent opportunity to offset future health care costs and benefit our society overall.

This caucus is a new and unique opportunity to engage the public through MPPs in discussions on innovation and health sciences, which is a \$9-trillion global health science economy. Here in Ontario, this sector employs more than 80,000 highly skilled workers. A recent report entitled *How Canada Should Be Engaging in a \$9-*

Trillion Economy, released just last month, stated that the best way to enhance our health science industry, to nurture the start-ups to make them viable for investment and to ensure our province takes a leadership position in the global health science economy is to:

(1) Improve time to market by streamlining regulatory processes;

(2) Ensure a clear, transparent and consistent health technology assessment process;

(3) Invest in electronic medical records, patient databases and big data that are accessible to industry;

(4) Accelerate adoption of innovative technologies and simplify the procurement process; and

(5) Build a trust and strengthen relationships between government and industry as a mechanism to build a competitively successful health science industry.

I invite all members to join OBIO's CEO Gail Garland, along with leading CEOs Arun Menawat of Novadaq, Brian Courtney of Conavi, Cameron Piron of Synaptive, David Young of Actium Research and all the OBIO member companies displaying at tonight's reception. Join us from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the legislative dining room to learn more about this health care industry and hear about great ways to help our province.

THE BRIDGE

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to speak about The Bridge, an important community organization in the Hamilton area. By providing temporary housing and essential rehabilitation support services, The Bridge assists in reintegrating people who have been in prison back to the community. They receive help to build better lives, heal from their past hurts, find housing and jobs, and make important changes in their behaviour.

The Bridge Hamilton is not a halfway house. The program provides discharge planning for those returning from correctional facilities and prisons in the Hamilton area, short-term accommodation for up to six men at a time, a safe atmosphere of support for women and their families who are affected by incarceration, individual help for each ex-offender to develop new goals and action plans, and group support programs.

The Bridge operates under the philosophy of restorative justice, so it wishes to expand its supportive ideas to the victims and their families. Often, men and women who have been released from prison hear about the program's distinct benefits and make the choice to attend. The Bridge receives funding from the federal government, the city of Hamilton and the provincial government, but it is sustained primarily through charitable donations and fundraising events.

Thank you to the staff and volunteers at The Bridge for their truly valuable work.

ECONOMIC SYMPOSIUM

SYMPOSIUM ÉCONOMIQUE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On March 31, I was glad to be part of a great event in Orléans : An Economic

Symposium: Future Positioning of Business and Industry, which was the first by the Orléans Chamber of Commerce. It was a half-day gathering that brought together a combination of established businesses looking to expand, start-ups, developers and entrepreneurs who just want to get their ideas off the ground. This was in order to help them navigate through the complex dealings of government agencies for funding and support and to learn what would drive their businesses to the next level.

Local businesses were able to network and establish contacts in person with economic development representatives and hear from speakers who covered topics from supports for grants, loans, doing business with the federal government and exporting to foreign markets to intellectual property.

Ce fut une vitrine impressionnante de ce qu'Ottawa-Est a à offrir. J'étais d'ailleurs fière de voir à quel point nos entreprises locales ont le désir de propulser leurs entreprises et leur plan d'affaires vers l'économie de demain.

1510

Thank you to the Orléans Chamber of Commerce for this initiative, especially the co-chairs of the economic development committee, Deborah O'Connor and Sean Crossan. Special thanks to Orléans MP Andrew Leslie, parliamentary secretary Greg Fergus, city councillors Bob Monette, Stephen Blais and Jody Mitic, and Mayor Jim Watson for being part of this event.

STEVE MERKER

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today I would like to celebrate the accomplishments of Steve Merker, a cycling enthusiast who has been named one of Canada's top 14 most influential cyclists.

Steve has been a champion of cycling and active living over the years. He is known to cycle along Huron-Bruce roads en route to Bruce Beach. He first began cycling in preparation for a series of triathlons in the early 1980s. Amazingly enough, Steve continues to commute from his home north of Toronto to just across the street here, approximately 40 kilometres each way.

Steve's contributions to improving Canadians' health extend beyond his impressive cycling regime. Nine years ago, Steve helped build the Ride to Conquer Cancer event, which brings together thousands of Canadians to raise funds for cancer research.

To hear more about Steve's work, check out cycling-magazine.ca. Steve was inspired to help fund this event by his wife, Cathy Buchanan, who just happens to be my first cousin. It's safe to say we both get our unbeatable spirit from our moms. It's important to know that Cathy fought and survived an aggressive form of leukemia in the mid-1990s. Since its inaugural year, the ride has raised over \$119 million for the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation.

Steve leads by example and is an inspiration. I sincerely hope everyone will support this month's Daffodil campaign.

LEON KORBEE

Mr. John Fraser: Just before Easter, Leon Korbee, a member of our Queen's Park family and friend to all, passed away. It came as shocking and sad news to many of us.

You only need to consider the words people used in the conversations in the hallways and offices, in the outpouring of messages online or at the beautiful celebration of his life last week to understand what Leon meant to many of us here, words like: wonderful, genuine, kind, ethical, decent, generous, fun, humble.

There was a certain ease about being with Leon. Always smiling, always positive, he made no distinctions between people. He showed a genuine interest in whoever he was with. Many people have said that he made them feel special, and he had a penchant for nicknames, like Bud and Buddy a lot.

In this place, where it's really easy to surrender to cynicism and often really hard to build trust, over 20 years as a journalist and as an adviser to two Premiers, Leon understood the importance of generosity in small, everyday kindnesses and used them to lift up those people around him.

We all knew Leon loved golf and hockey and, most importantly, loved his family. He was especially proud of his children, Hannah and Lanny.

To Brenda, Hannah, Lanny, his mother Karin, Hedy and Greg, and all of Leon's family, Leon's Queen's Park family offers our sincerest condolences. Leon's easy smile and kind heart left a mark here and we're all the better for it.

EVENTS IN PORT HOPE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: This past week, I had the pleasure of delivering some great news in the municipality of Port Hope that will continue in the efforts to build Ontario up.

Over the past few years, it's become more and more apparent that the Barrett Street Bailey bridge has created some safety concerns and emergency access issues, as Port Hope is separated by the Ganaraska River and this is one of the very few crossings, Speaker.

A new, two-lane bridge will alleviate traffic congestion and provide enhanced load capacity to handle today's transportation needs. Municipal studies indicate that over 1,700 vehicles cross the bridge each day. I'm delighted that the province has recognized the need to invest in infrastructure projects in rural Ontario and contributed almost \$1 million for the replacement of the Barrett Street bridge.

Port Hope mayor Bob Sanderson tells me that the one-lane Bailey bridge was installed almost 40 years ago as a temporary solution when the existing bridge was damaged during a flood of the Ganaraska River. He is elated that this bridge is finally being replaced with a long-term solution.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to invite all members of the House to come to Port Hope on Saturday, April 16, to watch and/or participate in the annual Float Your Fanny

Down the Ganny event. The community event has been ranked in the top 100 festivals in Ontario, and is held every year in recognition of the March 21, 1980, Ganaraska River flood that devastated the Port Hope downtown area. It is a 10-kilometre race in a canoe, kayak or whatever popular or crazy craft, where folks create homemade vessels to float down the river. It's always a great time. I hope to see you all there.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated April 5, 2016, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a report on the public accounts of the province, chapter 2, 2014 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table the committee's report today, entitled Public Accounts of the Province (Chapter 2, 2014 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario).

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Lisa MacLeod, Vice-Chair; Han Dong; John Fraser; Percy Hatfield; Harinder Malhi; Julia Munro; Arthur Potts; and Lou Rinaldi.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ontario Financing Authority who appeared before the committee on November 4, 2015.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and the report-writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee, and staff in the Legislative Research Service.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BUD MONAHAN GUITAR SALES & SERVICE LTD. ACT, 2016

Mrs. Martow moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Bud Monahan Guitar Sales & Service Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill will stand referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 33 and 34 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the appointment of a new Deputy Speaker for the 41st Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that Ms. Soo Wong, member for the electoral district of Scarborough—Agincourt, be appointed Deputy Speaker and the Chair of the Committee of the Whole House.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader moves that Ms. Soo Wong, member of the electoral district of Scarborough—Agincourt, be appointed Deputy Speaker and the Chair of the Committee of the Whole House. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding

changes to the memberships of eight standing committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding standing committees. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

That on the Standing Committee on Estimates, Mr. Thibeault replaces Mr. Balkissoon, and Mr. Potts replaces Mr. Ballard;

That on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr. Dong replaces Ms. Wong;

That on the Standing Committee on General Government, Ms. Malhi replaces Mr. Dickson, and Mr. Rinaldi replaces Ms. Kiwala;

That on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mr. Milczyn replaces Mr. Dong, and Mr. Ballard replaces Mr. Potts;

That on the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Dhillon replaces Mr. Balkissoon, and Ms. Kiwala replaces Mr. Ballard;

That on the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Mr. Fraser replaces Mr. Thibeault, and Madame Lalonde replaces Mrs. Mangat;

That on the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, Mr. Dickson replaces Mr. Kwinter, and Mr. Delaney replaces Ms. Vernile; and

That on the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, Mrs. Mangat replaces Mr. Fraser, Mr. Kwinter replaces Mr. Dhillon, Ms. Vernile replaces Ms. Malhi, and Mr. Qaadri replaces Mr. Rinaldi.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy government House leader is moving that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees—

Interjections: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

All in favour? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE LA SENSIBILISATION À L'AUTISME

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Last week I had the pleasure of visiting Surrey Place Centre, a renowned organization that works diligently to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities and autism. They make an important difference in Ontario, and I was there to make an important announcement about autism services in Ontario.

Like Surrey Place, our government is committed to making a difference for young people with autism and their families. We're investing heavily in autism services for children and youth. We've done that by increasing our investments by 120% since 2004.

Mais les temps ont changé depuis que nous avons mis en oeuvre notre premier programme de services en matière d'autisme il y a plus de 10 ans.

But times have changed since we implemented our first autism program over a decade ago. As science progressed and we continued to learn more about autism spectrum disorder, prevalence rates have continued to increase, and so have the wait times for key services. Despite our annual investment of over \$190 million a year, families and children are still facing wait times upward of two years. Speaker, that's beyond two years in some parts of the province.

We've listened to parents, service providers and medical and clinical experts, and we know that the current system isn't meeting the needs of Ontario families. That's why I'm delighted and proud to stand before this House a very few short days after world autism day to reaffirm our government's investment of an additional \$330 million over the next five years so that children and youth with autism receive support at the right time and the services are better matched to their needs.

To make this happen, we are moving to an expanded and integrated autism program, one that makes it easier for families to access services for their children, and one where children receive services that are more flexible and responsive, based on their individual needs. Families, stakeholders and experts, including the Autism Spectrum Disorder Clinical Expert Committee, have told us that the current autism programs are not serving the right children at the right time and that children with autism and their families need a more responsive and comprehensive continuum of services.

Donc, que signifie notre nouveau Programme ontarien des services en matière d'autisme pour les enfants atteints d'autisme et pour leur famille?

What will our new Ontario Autism Program mean for children with autism and their families? The short answer is "better outcomes"—much better outcomes. Among other benefits, children and families will receive services sooner. Within two years, provincial wait times are projected to drop by more than half, on average. By 2021, the goal is to achieve average wait times of six months or less in the new Ontario Autism Program.

Families will have better service experiences, with one entry point into a new integrated program. More children will be able to access intensive services during the critical developmental window of ages two to four.

Les familles auront de meilleures expériences de service, avec un seul point d'entrée vers un programme intégré.

More children will receive individual services based on their needs, as more than 16,000 new spaces are being created over the next five years.

Importantly, the new Ontario Autism Program will also allow children to transition between interventions at

varying levels of intensity as their needs change over time. I think, Speaker, we agree that children generally change over time.

We know that the changes that we are proposing are bold, but they're grounded in scientific evidence and research. Clinical and research evidence compiled by the expert committee informed their numerous recommendations on how to improve service delivery for children with autism in Ontario. These recommendations in turn informed our work to date on the new Ontario Autism Program. They also reflect the most current evidence, which suggests that providing early intervention during the key developmental years can have an important impact on a child's developmental outcomes.

Nous allons continuer à demander l'avis du comité d'experts alors que nous mettons nos changements en oeuvre.

We will continue to seek guidance from the expert committee as we move forward with our changes.

We know that these changes will take some time to implement, and we need to get this right. That's why we're supporting children and families as we transition to the new program over the next two years. The families of children over the age of five who are currently on the wait-list for IBI services will receive \$8,000 in one-time funding to immediately purchase the services best suited to their child's specific needs. This is more than what is provided in other Canadian jurisdictions. These families will still be eligible for enhanced and more appropriate developmental services for their child.

As we implement the new integrated Ontario Autism Program, service providers will work closely with families to ensure the smoothest transition possible. We'll also be hosting online sessions, in partnership with Autism Ontario, starting this week for families to learn more about the new Ontario Autism Program. My ministry will establish an advisory group of service providers, parents and other experts to provide strategic advice during the transition to the new program.

We are also mindful that Ontarians with autism need support throughout their lives. That's why we'll continue to partner with other government ministries to support and strengthen services for all people with autism, including students when they're in school and youth transitioning to post-secondary education, employment and community life.

Notre gouvernement sait qu'il n'est pas toujours facile de changer les choses.

Speaker, our government knows that change is not always easy, but we also know that if we're doing the right and fair thing by all children and youth with autism in Ontario, it is the right thing to do. They and their families deserve nothing less than our absolute best efforts. While our significant investment is another step forward for children and youth with autism and their families, we know that our work is not done. With the ongoing support of our dedicated partners, our government will continue to work hard so that all young people with autism in our province have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

1530

Je vous remercie. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of my leader, Patrick Brown, and the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize World Autism Awareness Day. April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day, a day to raise awareness for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, or ASD.

Autism is a life-long neurological disorder that affects the way a person communicates and relates to the people and world around them. It is one of the most common developmental disabilities in Canada, and there are approximately 100,000 Ontarians on the autism spectrum.

I was proud to serve on the Select Committee on Developmental Services. Throughout the course of the committee, we heard that there is a wide variation in the services and supports available to the people with ASD, depending on where they live in the province.

That is why in our final report we recommended that there be a co-ordinated provincial strategy to address ASD through appropriate support services for individuals in all communities and regions, including access to early diagnosis and interventions, professional accreditation for autism service providers and consistent evaluations and benchmarks for implementing the ASD therapeutic interventions.

In 2014-15, there were 16,158 children with autism on the wait-list for IBI and ABA therapy. Only 10,817 children are receiving ABA and IBI therapy from the province. Instead of finding ways to provide the necessary support to the thousands waiting for therapy, this government has decided that children five and older will be ineligible to receive IBI therapy. This is a tragedy, and yet another example of this government breaking faith with families across Ontario.

The government is clearly telling families with children five and older with autism, "You're on your own." Many of these families have been waiting for years to receive the necessary help their child deserves. Now, government has completely shut the door on these families.

Families are outraged at the government's recent decision. Since the announcement last week, my office has been contacted non-stop by families expressing anger, disappointment and betrayal. I want to read an email from a parent who is devastated by the government's decision:

"George is five years old. His birthday was October 6. He has been on the IBI waiting list for over two years now. He was placed on the IBI waiting list soon after he was diagnosed with moderate to severe autism spectrum disorder in November 2014....

"The new changes are extremely upsetting to myself and my family. This poor child has been on countless waiting lists, only to be shuffled onto other lists for services. Now, after waiting so long, we are told that he will be removed and we are to be given \$8,000. That won't even pay two months of IBI therapy....

"I want all children to have access to this life-saving therapy, but I feel upset and so cheated that it has been ripped away from my child.

"I have attended all the 'mandatory' sessions, attended workshops, read books and have paid out of pocket to help my son. I do not regret any of these measures that I have taken. I am a hard-working taxpayer and I only want what my son was 'supposed' to receive from the provincial government. This change will devastate my son's future and countless other children who have been waiting on the list."

Mr. Speaker, parents are devastated and frustrated by this government's decision. This goes against the principle of inclusion, which is what World Autism Awareness Day is about. This decision pits families with children under five against children over five. In the spirit of World Autism Awareness Day, I urge this government to reverse this poorly-thought-out plan. Autism doesn't end at five.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm honoured to rise in my role as the Ontario NDP critic for children and youth services, and as the MPP for Hamilton Mountain, to speak to World Autism Awareness Day. I have to say that I am also very honoured to wear my pin in the House today.

I wonder if the government is aware of the turmoil and the devastation that they have caused to families of kids with autism spectrum disorder across the province. Last November, I raised the issue of families languishing on wait-lists for essential autism services. I never in my wildest dreams imagined that I would be responding today to a situation where some kids are actually worse off than they were before.

Linda DiMambro and Kara Onofrio came here and shared their stories of their sons languishing on wait-lists for services that they so desperately needed. How did this government respond? By ensuring that Justin and Anthony will now never receive funding for IBI therapy, because they are over the age of five.

They are just two families. I have heard from hundreds and hundreds of families from right across this province, expressing their complete devastation with this government's decision. I delivered those letters today to the Premier and to the minister. If they think that they are truly doing the right thing, they should personally respond to each family, and explain to families why they don't think that their kids over five deserve access to life-changing therapy, explain why families who were told just last week that their children were ideal candidates for IBI are now, at the stroke of a pen, not eligible, and explain why they decided to reduce the wait-list by simply kicking kids off the list.

They should listen to parents, to what parents are experiencing while they're languishing on the lists or having to sell their houses to pay for private therapy, all because the government failed them, failed to appropriately invest in services for children with autism, and failed to ensure that parents have the supports they need best to support their kids with ASD.

They should listen to parents who have seen the extraordinary success of IBI for their children over the age of five—a sentiment that has been backed up by a number of behaviour specialists who work with their kids and have contacted me. They should hear the joy that they experience when their child says their first words at the age of six, or the relief they feel when they no longer have to rely on diapers.

I do not dispute that early intervention is crucial. I have made that point several times in this House. But that doesn't mean that later intervention is meaningless—far from it. It is very unfortunate that this government is choosing to put that spin on this announcement.

Now they are failing those same kids—who have been stuck on those wait-lists—all over again. Parents are contacting my office, talking about a lost generation of kids with ASD who waited and waited for services, never to get them. This is the government's legacy and it's nothing to be proud of.

Liberal members need to ask themselves what they would do if it was their child being kicked off a wait-list because the government needed to make an announcement. They should speak to the devastated families in their communities. I know they are there, because I have heard from them, and they need you to hear them as well. Those parents, who have already given everything that they have, now have to lead this fight once again for their children, for all children with ASD.

But it doesn't have to be this way. At the very least, the government should ensure that kids who were on the wait-list at the time that the government made this decision are grandfathered in. It's the least thing that they could do for families. How many parents need to come forward, begging this government to help them?

I ask the minister today to respond to parents and ensure their kids get access to life-changing therapy. Kids with ASD touch our lives in the most significant ways. They teach us a new way to look at the world. Let us make sure that they get the support they need. It's one decision away.

On autism awareness day, I ask this minister to immediately stop kicking kids off the wait-list and to do the right thing for all of us, because when kids with ASD have the support they need, we all benefit.

On behalf of the NDP caucus, we urge the minister to please stop these changes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Wellington—Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I appreciate it.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

"Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can't afford to pay more;

"Whereas Ontario's businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

"Whereas the recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

1540

"Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

I support this petition and have also affixed my signature to it.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the day of mourning is a day to remember and honour those who have been killed, injured or who suffered illness as a result of work-related incidents and to honour their families. It also serves as a day to protect the living by strengthening our commitment to health and safety in all workplaces in Ontario for the common goal of preventing further deaths and injuries from occurring in the workplace;

"Whereas a workers day of mourning is recognized in more than 100 countries around the world;

"Whereas 1,000 Canadian workers are killed on the job each year and hundreds of thousands more are injured or permanently disabled;

"Whereas it is expected that more than 90% of workplace deaths are preventable and raised awareness of this fact is necessary. Every worker is entitled to a safe work environment, free of preventable accidents, and that we, as a province, are committed to reaching such a goal;

"Whereas our MUSH sector (municipal, universities, schools and hospitals) as leaders in their communities are not doing enough to recognize and raise awareness of the seriousness of workplace injury and death;

"Whereas the flag symbolizes us as a province, and the lowered flag is a powerful symbol of our shared loss and respect, brings focus to the issues and symbolizes we are united on this front as a province at all levels....;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the workers of Ontario with swift passage of Bill 180, Workers Day of Mourning Act, 2016, that would require all publicly funded provincial and municipal buildings to lower their Canadian and Ontario flags on April 28 each year."

I support this. I'll give it to Amelia to bring up to the front.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime. When public education about sexual violence and harassment is not prioritized, myths and attitudes informed by misogyny become prevalent. This promotes rape culture.... Sexual violence and harassment survivors too often feel revictimized by the systems set in place to support them. The voices of survivors, in all their diversity, need to be amplified. Survivors too often face wait times for counselling services as our population grows and operating costs rise for sexual assault support services.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment's final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change ... and address attrition rates within our justice system, including examining 'unfounded' cases, developing enhanced prosecution models and providing free legal advice for survivors."

I agree with this petition. I will put my name to it and give it to page Khushali.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition here signed by hundreds of people concerned about health care cuts here in the province of Ontario.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to

come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Madeline.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition to stop the closure of provincial and demonstration schools.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas provincial and demonstration schools in Ontario provide education programs and services for students with special education needs;

"Whereas there are four provincial and three demonstration schools for anglophone deaf, blind, deaf-blind and/or severely learning-disabled students, as well as one school for francophone students who are deaf, deaf-blind and/or have severe learning disabilities;

"Whereas even with early identification and early intervention, local school boards are not equipped to handle the needs of these students, who are our most vulnerable children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(a) oppose the closure of provincial and demonstration schools and recognize that these specialized schools are the last hope for many children;

"(b) stop the enrollment freeze at these schools in order for students and their families, who have exhausted all other available resources, to have access to equal education for themselves without added costs, to which they, like all students, are entitled."

I fully support this, will sign my name to it and send it with page Chandise.

PROMPT PAYMENT

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition entitled "Support Prompt Payment Legislation in Ontario," and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas delayed payments are a harmful practice in Ontario's construction industry;

"Whereas Ontario's trade contractors incur significant costs when payments are delayed from general contractors;

"Whereas cash flow risks have forced many contractors out of business and discouraged others from investing in capital or hiring new workers;

"Whereas payment delays have led trade contractors to hiring fewer apprentices, which will lead to fewer qualified tradespeople in the future;

"Whereas prompt payment legislation offers government the opportunity to provide stimulus to the economy without spending a dime;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Ontario Legislature to support Ontario's construction industry by adopting prompt payment legislation as a means to address the payment delay issues in Ontario."

I've supported this for a number of years. I'm happy to sign my name to this petition.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Wayne Gates: "Petition to Stop the Plan to Increase Seniors' Drug Costs.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario will require most seniors to pay significantly more for prescription drugs, starting on August 1, 2016, under changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit;

"Whereas most seniors will be required to pay a higher annual deductible of \$170 and higher copayments each and every time they fill a prescription at their pharmacy;

"Whereas the average Ontario senior requires at least eight different types of drugs each year to stay healthy and maintain their independence; and

"Whereas many seniors on fixed incomes simply cannot afford to pay more for prescription drugs and should not be forced to skip medications that they can no longer afford and to put their health in jeopardy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the government's plans to make ... Ontario seniors pay more for necessary prescription drugs and instead work to expand prescription drug coverage for all Ontarians."

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space as it was built for a mere 7,000" emergency room "visits and experiences in excess of 33,000 visits annually; and

"Whereas the government-implemented Places to Grow Act forecasts massive population growth in New Tecumseth, which along with the aging population will only intensify the need for the redevelopment of the hospital; and

"Whereas all other hospital emergency facilities are more than 45 minutes away with no public transit available between those communities; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government immediately provide the necessary funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital for the redevelopment of their emergency department, operating rooms, diagnostic imaging

and laboratory to ensure that they can continue to provide stable and ongoing service to residents in our area."

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

1550

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to thank Mrs. Valérie Dalcourt, qui m'a fait parvenir cette petition.

« Entendu que ... le 10 février le RÉFO, l'AFO et la FESFO ont présenté le rapport du Sommet provincial des États généraux sur le postsecondaire en Ontario français;

« Entendu que le rapport a indiqué un besoin et un désir pour une université de langue française;

« Entendu que le 26 mai ... la députée France Gélinas a présenté un projet de loi pour créer cette université;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario ... de commencer la création de l'Université de l'Ontario français dès que possible. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Cooper de l'amener aux greffiers.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas demonstrative schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs; and

"Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstrative schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

"Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstrative schools and other essential support services;

"Whereas the freezing of student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind;

"Whereas the situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" and the government of Ontario "to immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstrative schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential."

I totally agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with MacFarlane.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician

services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I agree with this petition. I will give it to Christina to bring up to the table.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition signed by many, many people in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs;

“Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

“Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

“Whereas freezing student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind; and

“Whereas the situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Jerry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available this afternoon for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 23, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I’ll be sharing my time with the great Minister of Education, who I know is very concerned about this.

Every time we get into smoking in public places—this was a movement that really started in Canada about 15 years ago. The first city to ban smoking in indoor public spaces was the city of Ottawa. The Minister of Energy was the mayor of the city at that time. We were a little competitive—I was the mayor of the city of Winnipeg at that time—as to which city was going to be the first to ban smoking in indoor public places. I am happy to report that Ottawa beat Winnipeg and my friendship with Minister Chiarelli survived that very competitive thing.

I actually kind of freaked my election campaign out. Usually we were very studied and careful about what we said during elections, and we decided the day before the vote that I would announce that we would be doing it immediately in the next term. Of course my campaign manager had a small cardiac arrest, because it meant that the mayoralty election was going to be, amongst other things, a referendum on banning smoking in indoor public places.

The Minister of Energy and I have often talked about that competition that he won and, in a sense, that the citizens of Ottawa and the citizens of Winnipeg won. It was within years, Mr. Speaker: By the time I came back to Ontario in 2004, almost every major city in Canada had eliminated smoking in indoor public spaces.

Now, quickly thereafter, in the decades since, we have eliminated smoking in outdoor public spaces. What it has done, as a former smoker, is that it denormalizes it; it makes it harder to do. It makes it more socially acceptable not to smoke. It normalizes healthy behaviour. Quite frankly, for all of those of us who sit on outdoor public patios or go out for a beer with a friend and sit at a bar or have lunch, it’s really nice not to have smoke around. I think that that changing of the physical environment was probably one of the things that was most consequential in reducing smoking.

Now there’s more complexity. There’s vaping, there are people who smoke medical marijuana and there’s a lot of other products out there right now that come with varying degrees of health risks and other risks. It is great to see that we are continuing that tradition in this province and this Legislature, and continuing to move ahead on reducing smoking.

It’s hard, Mr. Speaker. For most of us in this room, all of us have lost someone to lung cancer or to a cancer in which smoking has been determined to be a causative factor or certainly a risk multiplier for people. My father died at 63. I remember he became a light cigarette smoker as he got older, and he was still trying to do everything. He was self-employed—he had a small family business—and he died not much older than I am today, much too young, when he wasn’t prepared for it.

My mother, who is still fortunately alive, after 43 years of marriage lost her husband, and also lost her sense of security and well-being because she wasn't prepared for the family business. She didn't have the ability to carry on without him financially. As we are doing work with pensions, she was one of the majority of people who did not have a pension from a small family business.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the cost of smoking, the price to pay, can often be much more severe as people are grieving the loss of someone and then have to put their lives back together. I think one of the things we are trying to do in this government—and I think that is a view shared with both the opposition parties—is that we really do not want other generations in the future to see the kind of loss of loved ones, of spouses, often in their fifties and sixties and sometimes younger, dying of cancer.

1600

My father died in his sixties. My uncles who were smokers and miners died in their forties and fifties. It's interesting that my mom has a lot of sisters, none of whom smoked. My aunt in Sudbury is in her late, late nineties, almost 100. My mom—I won't say her age because she'll cut me off and take me out of the family will. But it's interesting that these women who didn't smoke lived almost to 100, well into their eighties and in most cases nineties.

How do we continue to denormalize this? The most effective tool that we've had is to remove it from public places. You don't make it easy to have a coffee or a beer with a cigarette. You create the social interactions. Most of us who used to smoke—I used to live when I was in university with a can of Guinness for lunch and a cigarette. I was one of those guilt-ridden anglophones in Quebec in the middle of the Quiet Revolution, where we were all feeling guilty at university for 200 years of English colonial imperialism and the suppression of the French language, carrying all of this guilt as very active adolescents there.

I remember the thing that made you cool if you were a young, anglophone kid from the English suburbs hanging out in downtown Montreal was to smoke Gauloises or Gitanes, which are truly the most ghastly cigarettes, and to drink things like Campari just to be cool, which was really one of the most ghastly drinks. I'm sorry; I'm sure there's a Campari distributor in my constituency who's going to write me a nasty note now.

It's interesting to us that smoking, while an addiction, is also a social convention. It has to do with status, popular culture, Hollywood, and what we've done.

I'm very pleased that we have this bill. It's dealing with electronic cigarettes; it's dealing with a whole range of other things. There is some possibility that marijuana may be legalized in some way, as it has been in many other places, and we want to be ready for that, should our national government decide to take steps to liberalize the laws around marijuana and start to decriminalize it.

It's good to—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Oh, I did say that.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, he did.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, I did. The Minister of Education and I actually go back almost as long as the Minister of Energy and I go back. Anyone whose ministry starts with "E," whether it's education, environment or energy, we have to be good friends.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The E-guys.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, we're the E-guys, the e-team.

Mr. Speaker, I do have to fill up 10 minutes. If I can be totally frank, this is just a very sensible bill. There is an incredible amount of good things to be said about it, but in the many hours of debate we've had before, I cannot be as inspiring or as eloquent as my predecessors. I'm sounding like a bit of a broken record, but we do have to meet our time commitments.

I think this is well supported by industry, by people who represent any kind of reasonable social or commercial interests. It's a good thing to do—probably less said about it now and more action taken. I haven't heard from members in this House any objections at this point in time. I do have friends who do vape as part of their process to get that. We're not banning it. We're just dealing with it as a social convention in the sense of the civility of public spaces and minimizing the annoyances to the public.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be very entertained this afternoon since I am running out of things to say about this wonderful bill, and I have to speak for another minute and 26 seconds. For me to actually be at a loss for words is truly an historic event in this House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. John Yakubuski: No, but it's a joyous occasion for us, I can tell you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It is. My good friend from Nipissing, Renfrew and Pembroke in some order—

Mr. John Yakubuski: And all points in between.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: See, you would understand this. The member would understand this, because my partner is Polish and an operating room nurse with a long career in the Canadian military. I live in a house where you could bounce a dime off the bed and you could do neurosurgery on our kitchen floor.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, the member from Nickel Belt, who worked in health care, as I did, will understand what it's like living with an operating room nurse who has a long history in the military. I live in this world that is basically a bug-free, sterile zone and I am so not like that. I'm not the Jack Lemmon character in *The Odd Couple*; let me put it that way.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well, in one way, maybe I am, but we didn't have an out-loud word for people like me in sitcoms. They were just the very tidy gentlemen who polished their shoes too much, you know?

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, we've evolved since then.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, it has been a great pleasure. As I've often said during debates around sex ed and many

other things, my friend from Guelph, the MPP from Guelph, the Minister of Education, can make certain things exciting, like discussions about her home city of Guelph, because she can make them passionate and compelling and exciting. When talking about respect for children and responsible sexual behaviour, she can make sex sound incredibly boring.

I will turn it over to my colleague the Minister of Education, who is truly a gifted speaker and a thoughtful leader in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you. Actually, it's interesting, because my colleague the Minister of the Environment mentioned Winnipeg and Ottawa being some of the early adopters when it came to no smoking in places like bars. Interestingly, Guelph wasn't the first, but it was fairly early in the list of municipalities that banned smoking in workplaces and, in particular, bars and restaurants. That caused quite a bit of controversy in Guelph for a while. I can quite see how your campaign manager might have had a bit of a fit if you first trotted this out as a platform 24 hours before the vote, because it certainly was a hot topic in Guelph long before this act, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, was passed.

Where I first ran into the whole issue of where you can and can't smoke was in terms of public health rules and the concern about high school students smoking. Another one of the things that predated this particular act was the banning of smoking anywhere in a school or on school property, which happened, if recollection serves me, somewhere back in the mid-1990s or so. It applied to both the students and the teachers. You can imagine that this caused as much angst for some of the teachers, who had been long-time smokers and allowed to smoke in the staff room, as it did for the students who had less years of becoming addicted to tobacco under their belt.

In the stories that my colleague and I are talking about, they capture the two sides of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act because part of the act is about preventing the use of tobacco by individuals: What can we do to discourage individuals, for their own health, from taking up smoking or what can we do to encourage them to stop smoking? We have a whole lot of rules about where you can sell tobacco, how it is packaged, who can buy it—not kids. That is addressing your own health.

The other part of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is about preventing second-hand smoke. We have a lot of rules about not being able to smoke in workplaces, not being able to smoke in enclosed public places, and those are really geared at the effect of the smoker on the other people in the workplace, the other people in the entertainment venue, the other people in the bar. We're trying to prevent illnesses that are caused by second-hand smoke.

Why are we amending the act? One of the things that came up, I think maybe back before Christmas, was this discussion about, how does medical marijuana fit into all of this? The Smoke-Free Ontario Act really talks mainly about tobacco: Where can you purchase tobacco? Where can you smoke tobacco? It's quite explicit in talking

about tobacco. So the whole issue came up back before Christmas, the fact that when smoking was banned in all these public places, it didn't say, "Smoking is banned"; it said, "Smoking tobacco is banned," which brought up the issue: Does that mean you can actually go to a bar and smoke medical marijuana? We're talking about medical marijuana, and it's legal to smoke/vape medical marijuana.

1610

Does that mean you can go to the workplace and sit at a desk next to somebody else and smoke medical marijuana? Does it mean you can go to a restaurant and sit at a table next to somebody else and smoke medical marijuana? Does it mean that you can sit in the lobby of your condo and smoke medical marijuana? Does it mean you can go to the theatre and smoke medical marijuana? All of those things would be banned if you were talking about smoking tobacco, but how does it apply to medical marijuana?

What we're doing in this bill is banning the smoking of medical marijuana in places where the smoking of tobacco would be banned. This is not about, is it legal or illegal to use medical marijuana, or is it helpful to a variety of conditions to smoke medical marijuana? It is about second-hand smoke and second-hand impacts on the health of the other people in these public places that we want to ban the smoking of medical marijuana.

Basically, that's what this bill says, although if you look at the bill, it doesn't actually word it quite that way, and there's a very good reason that it doesn't. The bill itself actually talks about adding "prescribed products and substances" to what the act says. So it specifies that if you're smoking or vaping various prescribed products and substances, that would be forbidden, and then we will define in regulation what a "prescribed product or substance" is.

Why would we do it that way? The reason we would do it that way is that it means we can say, by regulation, that medical marijuana is a "prescribed product or substance." It also makes it quite easy to address another problem that may occur, and has not yet occurred, which is if and when at some point in the future it becomes legal to smoke or vape non-medical marijuana. Then it will be an easy regulatory matter to add non-medical marijuana use to the list of prescribed products or substances you cannot smoke or vape in public.

Just let me flip some pages here, Speaker. If you look at all the places where you will not be able to smoke or vape medical marijuana, just as you are not allowed to smoke or vape tobacco, the prohibited list of places would be enclosed public places, enclosed workplaces, restaurants and bar patios, schools, including the grounds—we mentioned that already—common areas in condominiums, apartment buildings or university and college residences, child care centres—something else I care about that comes under my jurisdiction—and places where private home daycare is provided, also for that same second-hand smoke and not wanting to injure the health of the child; that is also included. Outdoor reserved seating areas of sports arenas or entertainment

venues, children's playgrounds—again, the second-hand smoke issue—publicly owned sporting areas, motor vehicles when children under 16 years of age are present, outdoor grounds of hospitals—again, huge health risks there—and specified office buildings owned by the provincial government. That's the list of places in which we already ban the smoking of tobacco today under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

With this act, we will also ban the smoking of medical marijuana in those same places.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to speak to the amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act today and to listen to the comments from the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Education. One was a story and one was kind of telling us about what the bill is actually going to do. We appreciate that.

However, let's not lose sight of the fact that we're debating this bill because they—not them specifically but the Associate Minister of Health—messed up when she publicly stated that medical marijuana was going to be a free-for-all and you were going to be able to smoke it anywhere you wanted. So the government was forced into bringing in this legislation to clarify the situation.

I'm hopefully going to get a chance to speak to this bill. I'll talk about my own experiences with smoking and the effects of smoking, and smoking in the environment in which I lived and worked, and all of that kind of stuff. Just to put a period on the sentence about why we think that we need to take every step we can to restrict access to smoking—because of its long-term, proven, detrimental health effects over generations—we know a whole lot more about it than we did at the time when my father was gone to fight in the Second World War. They were issued tobacco rations because that was part of the expectations from the soldiers: God, they were out there putting their lives on the line every day; the least they could get was some tobacco.

The world has changed a great deal over the years; we all recognize that. Years ago, when we used to go to a dance hall, you would sit there all night long smoking, or be around smoking, and it didn't bother you. Today, if somebody lights up a cigarette a mile and a half away, I can tell. That's how conditioned we've become to a smoke-free environment. This is something that's in the right direction. But nevertheless, it's happening because they messed up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to stand and add my comments to Bill 178, the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, 2016. I just wanted to speak briefly to something the Minister of the Environment said. He was talking about "nasty cigarettes." In my opinion, as an ex-smoker, they're all nasty.

I used to smoke, about three decades ago. I know that's surprising because I'm only 25, but back in high school, I used to smoke. I learned very quickly that if you had cigarettes—because often teenagers don't have their

own money—your friends would come and ask you for cigarettes because they couldn't buy their own. So I learned very quickly that there were three options to stop people from bumming cigarettes off of you. One of them was to smoke menthol, although there were some who didn't mind, or I would smoke Player's filter or Export green, because they were probably the most noxious cigarettes that you could smoke. They were probably the hardest on your throat and your lungs, so nobody wanted to borrow them. My now husband, who was my boyfriend back then, used to chew the tip of the filter so it would go gooey and nobody would ask him for a drag off of his cigarette. I can certainly appreciate the comments about the different kinds of cigarettes that were being produced.

I'd also like to take the 35 seconds I have left to address comments made by the Minister of Education about how this is an amendment to a bill that was put through. I have constituents in my riding who recently opened a compassion lounge. The owner is a medical marijuana user himself. He put a great deal of money into opening this business and now is going to be out a great deal of money because he's immediately going to have to shut down, not to mention that the staff he has hired will now be out of work. They really dropped the ball when they brought the legislation through the first time. I really think that the cost to those who opened up these compassion lounges should be addressed by the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to thank my colleagues and the members opposite—the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, the Minister of Education and the members from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and also Windsor West—for their comments.

1620

This is a plan for the future benefit of Ontario residents and one that has direct impact on the health and well-being of people of all ages and, in turn, a direct impact on our health care system.

It's our duty as elected members to protect people. We're here to protect citizens from the harmful effects of smoking and, it turns out, that doesn't just mean tobacco anymore; it includes vaporizers and it also includes medical marijuana.

As society and habits change, our rules and regulations need to evolve and improve, and that's what we're doing with these proposed changes. We are amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to allow for the inclusion of other prescribed products and substances besides tobacco. This will enable our government to move forward with proposed amendments that would prescribe medical marijuana by regulation as a substance that is subject to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act's no-smoking rules. It's important to be clear that these changes are specific to enclosed public spaces, enclosed workplaces and other specified areas.

In making these changes, our government will be protecting Ontarians. We will be protecting Ontarians

young and old, especially children and youth, from exposure to second-hand tobacco and medical marijuana smoke, and to the potential harmful effects of e-cigarette use.

We know that our young people are vulnerable and we know that this is the right thing to do. Our government believes this is a reasonable approach that establishes precautionary safeguards against second-hand exposure to medical marijuana smoke and vapour by members of the general public. We're helping to lower the health risks to non-smokers in Ontario. Again, as I said earlier, I think this is the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to be here today in the Ontario Legislature to talk about the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act.

While our caucus obviously does support this piece of legislation, I would be remiss not to point out that this is a result of a government who pushed through a bill without consultation and now has to clean up their own mess.

I think the government has somewhat embarrassed themselves when they announced that medical marijuana could be used anywhere. I think we remember years ago, our former colleague from Burlington, Joyce Savoline, would often bring an issue to this assembly with respect to marijuana being smoked in restaurant establishments while at the same time it was illegal to use tobacco. I think that's quite important.

That said, I will use my time in talking about how important it is to have a smoke-free Ontario. When my father was a town councillor in a small town called New Glasgow in Nova Scotia, he was actually advanced as being one of the first municipalities in North America to go smoke free. I remember the night that he was to vote for council to support his motion. They actually had to delay it because my uncle died from lung cancer—my dad's baby brother—at the age of 42. I remember at the time people saying—and I said it in my dad's eulogy when he died of cancer in 2007—that he stood on principle and he demanded change because he knew, in the early part of 2000, that his community could be a world leader by stopping smoking in public places, particularly in restaurants. I'm very proud of that.

The other person whom I want to acknowledge in my short time is Norm Sterling, who was a former member here for Carleton-Mississippi Mills. He was a tremendous advocate and one of the first to put forward legislation to ban smoking in Ontario. I'm very proud of both of them and their legacies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. One of the government members can reply.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just wanted to relay to my friend from Windsor West, who made those comments about the hierarchy of nasty cigarettes, that I found Gauloises and Gitanes to be very difficult cigarettes to smoke. The hipster factor when you're a young anglo-

phone hanging out with all your French separatist friends on the streets of Montreal was kind of an intimidating process.

I have to say that Russian cigarettes were so absolutely awful that I have to thank the Russian tobacco industry for my ability to quit because they were truly nasty. They were beautiful; they had gold tips on them.

One of my buddies when I was in university—we decided we were going to quit after about five or six years of smoking. I know, Mr. Speaker, you've never had a cigarette touch your lips. You're one of the truly good people in this House.

So what we did is, we got a carton of Russian cigarettes—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: A carton?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: A carton, and a bottle of Jack Daniels. We consumed it, Mr. Speaker, at a rate that probably broke all Guinness records. I spent the evening in a small room, talking to a white bowl. Both of us, for three months, were so ill that we both quit smoking because we couldn't look at a cigarette or anything like that for six months. So there are cigarettes that are actually nasty enough to promote quitting. I do not recommend to Ontarians this particularly aggressive, somewhat Irish approach to engineering a solution to the problem.

I think that, given how draconian some of the solutions are, this kind of bill and these kinds of measures are particularly important because it is much gentler to create the environment that dissuades people from smoking than leaving it up to the inventions of a 20- or 22-year-old who may come up with some rather bizarre and unconventional solutions to get off the stuff.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm happy to speak today on—it seems like a smoke-free day in the Ontario Legislature here today—Bill 178, which is actually an amendment to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. We'll get into why that is later.

The act proposes to prohibit the smoking of a prescribed product or substance in enclosed workplaces, public places and other areas. It also prohibits the smoking of the prescribed products or substances in a motor vehicle with a person who is less than 16 years old.

I remember I was a parliamentarian when that first came in, and I spoke an hour on that topic alone. I'm going to save everybody. I'm not speaking for an hour just on not smoking in a vehicle with children less than 16 years of age. Our health critic, the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, had to talk an hour on this specific bill and he did a great lead on this bill.

There was a time in the province of Ontario when smoking was something that was thought of as normal. I think that we've all been sharing stories here in the Legislature about smoking on airplanes. At the back of the plane, in my day, I can remember you were still able to smoke, which is incredible to think about it now. Inside bars, restaurants—it was everywhere.

I can even tell the story of when I first started nursing in the 1980s, and nurses were smoking at the nurses' station on the night shift, which kind of blows my mind at this second. That is the difference that has occurred since the 1980s—and I know the Minister of Education said it was in the 1990s that they were still able to smoke in the schoolyards. So that has obviously changed since the 1990s.

As the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, we didn't really notice it. You got used to the cigarette smell and the smoke. Now, you can tell immediately if someone has it on their clothes or you're within close proximity to a smoking area or someone who just had a smoke.

Even now, we have to think of the impacts of the second-hand smoke. But those cravings and those addictions are all very real. Everyone called it a habit back then, and it is still a habit today. It is an addiction to nicotine and it is hard to kick. We don't underestimate that. I don't think we'll take the recommendation to try and stop by buying Russian cigarettes. It may be recommended over on the opposite side, but he makes a point.

But second-hand smoke and the dangers of it—you had to convince people when we first started talking about second-hand smoke that it actually had an impact. Now everyone accepts that second-hand smoke has very many dangers: not just lung cancer, but emphysema, bronchitis, pulmonary diseases and, of course, the worst is death related to second-hand smoke.

We all know somebody who still smokes. Everyone in the Legislature probably knows someone who still smokes and some who have developed cancer because of it. It is still a real struggle.

There is certainly heavy propaganda from the tobacco industry: creative advertising—that was decades ago, right?—and packaging. Goodness, we mailed it off to our men in the war. When they fought the world wars, we mailed them cigarettes. It was a treat for them to get. It was innocently done, not knowing the dangers of smoking.

So we've had this cultural shift that's occurred, and in 2016, here we are acknowledging the need to have this conversation yet again. As I said, it wasn't that long ago that I spoke for an hour on stopping smoking in cars with children under 16. We keep evolving every few years, somewhat consistently. We're tackling the smoking.

1630

I know people have the right to make decisions for themselves based on their own needs, but when they negatively impact others—this is kind of a roundabout way to say why we're having the amendment to Bill 178, which is the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. It's re-examining smoking, limiting exposure to youth and young children, especially when they're in such an impressionable age bracket.

Now, the government has brought this bill in. I did see that the minister responsible, who brought the bill forward, has been in here this afternoon. We can basically say that the government kind of jumped the gun on the bill that they brought in, which we supported earlier.

It wanted to establish a set of regulations, but it didn't do the broad consultation is what happened here. I'm going to criticize the government here—not a real shock. They poorly executed this from the start. There are a lot of issues of how difficult life has become in Ontario.

I want to say that this government, if they had actually consulted on this, would have gotten the bill right. Basically, when they first talked about medical marijuana, it certainly backfired. While this bill was created to focus on medical marijuana, the government is now waiting for what its federal counterparts will do on the issue of legalization. While this bill should have been included in the original Bill 45, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, it seems like the government likes to make big announcements without really realizing the complexity and the reality of how it happens on the ground. They included banning tobacco, but of course that didn't also ban other substances that can be smoked. It's always good to have a topic about public health and health issues here, but this should have been done from the start. It should have been done correctly.

Whenever there are reports or studies done by industry stakeholders or academic scholars, the terms “public health agenda” and “social determinants of health” are used. Creating a culture of healthy living such as exercise, nutritious and balanced diets—making good habits is a big part of that.

As I said, a year ago this was brought in and banned smoking on outdoor patios. I want to just bring in here the Peterborough county health unit's tobacco—I was just there visiting the new facilities of the Peterborough County-City Health Unit, which I share with the member from Peterborough. They have been a very aggressive and progressive health unit. Some startling statistics were brought forward by the medical officer of health—I had a nice chat and toured the new facilities—that the provincial rate of smoking is 8% for expectant mothers. In Ontario, 20% of pregnant moms actually smoke here. Higher smoking, of course, we find in lower income and youths. And they actually have located that 130 deaths a year in the Peterborough city-county are attributable to smoking.

The other fact—the good fact—is that among the smokers they were able to survey, 75% actually wanted to quit. I know that the member from Ottawa—Nepean—Carleton, part of Ottawa—is here. The Ottawa Hospital actually has a really unique program that identifies smokers. They get counselling and start on the program before they leave the hospital. So they come into the hospital, they find out they're smokers and they start giving them options, brochures that they can quit smoking, and then they do follow-up programs afterwards when they're in the community. It's a great success story, very cost-effective, and I think that we should be promoting those types of programs that are out there. I'll leave that with the member from Nepean—Carleton to take back, that it's been a good program.

Mr. Jim Wilson: RVH in Barrie did it.

Ms. Laurie Scott: RVH in Barrie does it, too? All right, the member from Simcoe—Grey has just said—so

that's great—Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie does it also.

It's important to say, "Hey, it's good to talk about health," and I get to share some great statistics from my riding. The situation today is that we've had to bring another bill and take up all our time debating something that should have been included in the first bill, which is basically that they've left out the fact that people could smoke medicinal marijuana in public spaces; they just put tobacco in. That had to be corrected. Again, we go back to the fact that, if they had done their homework and had done the consultation with people who are on the ground—the stakeholders, as we call them here—they would have realized that this was going to be a mistake that was brought forward.

I also have the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit. They worked with restaurants, pubs and bars and their owners and employees for last year's legislative changes. I like to see those collaborations between government, business and the public to acknowledge issues like smoking. But as I said, we have now had to make this Bill 178 come in.

In Bill 45, the government prohibited the sale of promotional items together with tobacco products and the sale of flavoured tobacco products. A list of places where an inspector is specifically empowered to enter was broadened. Adjustments were made to the penalty and prohibitions provisions. The power to prescribe places for the purpose of the act was also amended to provide for exemptions. Amendments were also made to the Electronic Cigarettes Act, including the prohibition of the sale and supply of e-cigarettes to persons under the age of 19. Restrictions were placed on display and promotion. Packaging changed, and their use is now prohibited in closed workplaces and enclosed public spaces.

There is a bit of a nuance about vapes and e-cigarettes. The focus, of course, is to ensure that youth won't have access to these products, but it does create undue pressures on the shops. Again, as our health critic from Elgin–Middlesex–London has said, I do hope e-cigarette shops will have the capacity to teach someone how to use the product or fix it, within the regulations, because we just don't want them to go out on the curb and get their demonstration of how they actually use the e-cigarettes out there.

The reason why I mention these electronic products is because they can help smokers move away from smoking conventional tobacco. Much like a patch, e-cigarette liquid has different doses of nicotine, or none at all, to help people wean off smoking. It has been very helpful to a lot of people who have come up to me. When the bill was first introduced over a year ago, we were having conversations about the e-cigarettes. But it has been very effective in helping them to stop smoking. I think that's what our goal is.

Businesses should also continue to operate and be viable. People should be able to learn how to use these devices properly. I think that's also worth re-examining.

It's up to the government to have a plan to make decisions that are comprehensive and thorough. Input

from stakeholders and the public consultation, which we missed with this bill—and so many other bills that are brought forward by the government.

I want to give a shout-out to the member from Cambridge, who brought forward a private member's bill. It was Bill 41. That was a bill that actually could have been included. We're making amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act anyway. They could have brought her bill forward. It creates a lung health advisory council that would make recommendations to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. We are both nurses, and I remember speaking to this private member's bill when she brought it in.

The council would include an employee from the ministry and the Ontario Lung Association. The Ontario Health Quality Council would be responsible for providing an annual report to be tabled in the Legislature with respect to the minister's performance in undertaking the recommendations of the council. With the consideration of the council reports, the minister would develop and implement a provincial lung health action plan to support research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung diseases. Hey, that sounds good. It should also be heard in committee, actually, and could have been part of this bill.

So Bill 41 and Bill 139 could be part of the conversation about creating smoke-free environments and healthier living. As I discussed earlier, the lack of awareness for years has contributed to why smoking was so pervasive and, in some part, negatively influenced the choices that people were inclined to make.

Bill 139, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the Tobacco Tax Act, was introduced by my colleague the member from Prince Edward–Hastings to help fight contraband tobacco and the sale that is directed at our children. His wife is a teacher. She sees the evidence of contraband tobacco in our schoolyards.

1640

I certainly remember that butt studies were done. Literally, it's a butt study. They go and pick the cigarette butts off the schoolyards or just out at school locations where they're smoking. I think some 40% were contraband tobacco, which is frightening because that's a huge health concern. You don't know what's in the contraband tobacco.

It's an area that has not had enough attention focused on it. Contraband tobacco exists in all our communities, but it's so prevalently used by our young people in our schools.

These are two components that would make some meaningful changes to our province. The first is the public education program about the health risks associated with the use of tobacco. It includes amendments to prohibit the sale of tobacco in public and private schools. In addition, the fines to those presenting illegal age identification and those convicted of selling tobacco in designated spaces are increased.

I'm glad that businesses—the convenience stores predominantly, small businesses—are vigilant about minors who present fake IDs, a big problem out there. I support

the convenience stores association. The corner stores are vigilant with under-age smoking.

Health inspectors are also very diligent, certainly in my area. The Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit as well as the Peterborough County-City Health Unit have been very diligent in clamping down on illegal purchases of tobacco.

Unfortunately, when it comes to contraband cigarettes, there aren't inspectors. At the end of the day, it is a business for the people who are engaged in this illicit practice. Too many of our young kids have easy access—and the butt survey said it all for the schoolyards, when some 40% are contraband tobacco butts.

The bill brought forward by my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings is a step in the right direction. It's a hard stance. And these bills could have been part of the conversation. It all is part of creating healthier lifestyles.

Bill 139's second component is the Tobacco Tax Act. It would be amended to permit the minister to share the proceeds of forfeited property with police forces who participate in the investigation that leads to the said forfeiture. Our municipalities have small budgets. They're being stretched. They can certainly use this financial support, so that money can go toward responding to emergency situations, enhanced training on mental health, or training and awareness on the signs and symptoms of human trafficking, such as coercion, manipulation and forcible confinement.

Under this bill, enforcement powers will also be expanded to include police, and increases are made to the penalties that apply to offences relating to inter-jurisdictional importers, the manufacturers of tobacco products, the possession of unmarked cigarettes, and the purchase or receipt of marked or unmarked cigarettes for resale.

I know my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk, a couple of weeks ago, brought forward a private member's bill about the black market, not only in trade of tobacco but in humans and human trafficking, and in money laundering. It is a massive issue out there, and the province needs to realize the prevalence of it and bring in legislation dealing with it. My colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk has mentioned it numerous times in the Legislature, in numerous bills. He is tenacious. He doesn't give up. He has tried again. He comes from tobacco country. Our tobacco is in other markets all over the world, and they're wondering how that happens. That needs to be looked at. A lot of the tobacco farmers didn't realize they were selling tobacco to an illegal trade.

Tobacco is a serious issue. Some 13,000 Ontarians die every single year because of tobacco. In this day and age, with so much public realization of how harmful it is and the programs that are available, it is still a pretty staggering statistic.

In some areas, up to 50% of the sales are due to contraband. I think that we've all seen a huge rise in contraband tobacco in our ridings. That statistic says that one in three cigarettes is basically purchased illegally. Manitoba averages 15%, while Saskatchewan is at 11%. Again, I will comment that my board of health for the

Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit inspected 440 tobacco vendors in 2015 and laid 100 charges.

I'm happy to have been able to embrace the whole Smoke-Free Ontario Act with some statistics from the ridings and some current provincial issues that need to be addressed. We're speaking to an amendment to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act because, again, the government actually didn't fully consult with all the stakeholders and really only addressed smoking tobacco being banned and didn't address medicinal marijuana.

I appreciated the opportunity to speak for 20 minutes in the Legislature today on this bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Great speech.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It was an excellent speech.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, I know you were all deeply engaged.

I'll leave it to other members of the Legislature to speak for a length of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock in the House. She is one of the most knowledgeable members; she always puts a lot of research into what she's going to say here.

I've said before in the House that there is no shame in admitting to a mistake, and that's what this bill is all about. The government is admitting to a mistake, and they're going to correct it. There's no harm in that, except the harm comes into it when people have gone out in good faith—when the bill was first introduced and the minister said, "You'll be able to vape medical marijuana anytime, anyplace, anywhere"—and spent a lot of money, considerable sums of money, creating these compassion lounges. If this bill passes, that money will never be recovered, unless the government does the right thing, corrects its mistake by getting proof that the money was spent in a legitimate fashion for legitimate reasons and pays back the cost of those renovations to the people who laid out the funds.

We know that the precedent is there. The government made a huge mistake on the gas plants. They spent over a billion dollars correcting that mistake. I doubt that this one is going to cost that kind of money. I would expect it wouldn't. But let's be up front, let's show some compassion to the people who spent their money in good faith and let's correct the mistake all around, not just in the legislative wording of the bill but to look after those who went out and spent so much money on these compassion lounges and already had the renovations that were made based on the original wording of the bill. I think that's an important thing.

I hope the government takes this advice forward. I hope that when they commit to this bill and put it through committee and bring it back to the House, there will be language in there for exactly this purpose.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm absolutely pleased to rise and add my voice to this bill. I want to thank the MPP for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock as well as the MPP for Windsor-Tecumseh for the comments that they made.

I just want to go back to November 25, 2015. This is what the leader of the Conservative Party, Patrick Brown, had to say about the regulations that we brought forward. He said that he didn't quarrel with the regulations that we had brought forward. He said he wouldn't make "political hay" of the issue.

He went on to say, "If it's for medical purposes, it's for medical purposes. There's not going to be an overwhelming amount of people in Ontario running out to parks to have their medical marijuana."

The reason I quote this is not so much about—it's just to highlight the fact—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to please come to order. The Associate Minister of Health has the floor.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, point of order: I hope that the member would realize that referring to a woman as being taken to the woodshed or deserving a spanking is a little inappropriate in 2016.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I said the Premier gave her a spanking.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's not a point of order.

The Associate Minister of Health has the floor, and I'll give her some extra time.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I touched a nerve on the other side.

The reason I brought that up is very simple: To highlight the fact that it's a complex issue; that's all. I look forward to working with all of the people in this Legislature because this is a complicated issue. We look forward to working and getting it right—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke must come for order.

Associate Minister of Health, I will allow you to conclude your statement.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Mr. Speaker, I really don't have much to add other than to say that instead of pointing fingers at each other, let's just recognize that it's a complex issue and let's work together to get this right in the best interests of all Ontarians. That's what we are focused on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I commend my colleague and seatmate for the important messaging that she shared over the last 20 minutes because we have to recognize this bill for what it is. It's an effort to clean up a wrong

step. It's an effort to clean up yet another mistake this Liberal government has made and cast upon Ontarians.

There's a disturbing trend in terms of some of the mistakes. There was the land transfer tax that they stepped back from just today. We saw in the headlines that the Ontario government is revisiting the increased cost of doing business for seniors with regard to prescription drugs. I want to encourage the government to not stop correcting their mistakes. Don't stop there, folks. Let's think about the Green Energy Act, and the list could go on and on.

But getting back particularly to Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act: Because they made a mistake, I might add, we have to recognize that this government needs to go further. You know, it's one thing to address vaping in public, but it's another thing to be addressing a real root of the problem here in Ontario with regard to smoking, and that's contraband.

I was taken aback over the last couple of weeks when they blatantly disregarded the member from Haldimand-Norfolk's efforts to try to bring an end to contraband when we heard from the member here today that 50% of butt studies showed that contraband tobacco is prevalent here in Ontario. If this government was truly dedicated to moving forward in the right direction, they would listen sincerely to what we, in opposition, are saying and take some proper action towards contraband.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's a pleasure to rise once again to do two minutes on Bill 178, the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act.

I'd like to thank the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock because I learned something today. I have never heard of butt studies. If I'm going to be honest, I thought you were going in a totally different direction with that, so I'm glad that you clarified.

But I think it is important to know how many contraband cigarettes are out there and the potential danger of smoking contraband cigarettes because they are not regulated, and also the cost, the money lost to legitimate businesses that have gone through the proper channels in order to be able to sell tobacco and fall under rules where they can't be on display for kids. I think it's important to highlight that, and I appreciate the education today. They say it's important to learn something every day, and I did.

The member from Windsor-Tecumseh once again brought up the concern that when the original bill was brought forward, the government side was saying that people would still be able to use their medicinal marijuana in public places. So we found people who wanted to be able to do it in a social setting. They're being responsible. They're not going to go into a regular restaurant and expose other people to it. They've opened up compassion lounges and spent a lot of money. Now they're going to be out a lot of money, not to mention the employees they now have to fire.

The other concern that's out there is that there's no real clarity as to where people who have medicinal

marijuana licences and prescriptions can actually smoke or vape their medication. Some think they're not allowed to do it in their own home if they live in an apartment, a townhome or some sort of communal dwelling. I think the government needs to clarify the stance on that and let these people know where they can take their medicine, because it is medicine and it is important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That finishes our questions and comments.

The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I want to thank the members from Windsor–Tecumseh and Windsor West—it's a Windsor day over here in the third party caucus. I also learned about compassionate lounges, which I didn't know about before today, so education back at you. It was interesting to hear the comments and the investment that people have made in compassion lounges.

To the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, look, we're here correcting something that was missed in the bill. But, really, the government has brought forward the bill. The government, again, should have done the consultation and got it right the first time. You should do things correctly, so you don't have to go back and undo mistakes. My colleague from Huron–Bruce pointed that out, for sure.

As I said, I had certainly entertained the time speaking about public health. The fact is that we have brought up contraband tobacco, which I have brought up in this Legislature for, my gosh, almost a decade. We're still fighting contraband tobacco, and it's only increasing. We're talking, in general, about the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and that's good for health care. The problem is that when you have so much illegal, contraband tobacco being consumed out there and you don't know what is in that tobacco, do you think the health effects, going down the road, are going to be light? They are not. They're going to be even more severe. Smoking tobacco is bad enough, but things that are mixed within tobacco, which are chemicals that we don't even know, are not going to have a positive effect. Let me tell you, it's a lot of young people who are smoking this contraband tobacco.

The loss of revenue for businesses was brought up. Absolutely, businesses have been crying for contraband tobacco to be dealt with. But it's the health effects. If this government wants to do good public health policy, they should be tackling contraband tobacco next.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my turn to do what we call my lead, which means that I will have an hour to talk about Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

Let's be clear, Speaker. When the bill came out, I asked for a briefing. This is something that happens in this House. When a new bill comes out, I read it. I'm not a lawyer, so I read it with my eyes and my understanding of what I have. But then you had people who have worked on the bill—lawyers who have worked on the bill, people within the Ministry of Health—offer a brief-

ing. So I said, "Sure, absolutely. I think I understand it, but I would like to have a briefing."

The briefing took place in my office. From the beginning, when you introduce one another, to the time they left was all of seven minutes.

Why is it that the briefing was so short? It's because all that this bill does is add four words to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and those four words are "prescribed products and substances." So we're going through first reading, second reading, committee, third reading and royal assent to put four words into the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

But you know, Speaker, we spent half a year, which ended on May 28, 2015, making changes to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. It hasn't even been a year—it's been nine months, to be exact—since we spent half a year making changes to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Now we have to do this all over again because the Liberals forgot to add four words to the bill.

Speaker, I spent a lot of time in health promotion, and I support any health promotion effort that comes from any side of the House. I think this is the way of the future. I come from the party of medicare. Tommy Douglas made it clear when he said that medicare should not just be patching people when they get sick; the second stage of medicare is to keep people well. How do you do this? You do this with strong health promotion bills. How do you have strong health promotion bills? You do this by listening to what people have to say. You do this by making sure that you consult when you have a bill in front of you.

1700

We had this bill—it was called Bill 45—that opened the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. It was debated. It was rather controversial. Quite a few people came. I got thousands of emails regarding e-cigarettes, and so did the minister. But the Liberals always know best. The Liberals always—even if they do consult and even if they do pretend to listen, they don't hear us. They don't hear anybody's but their own ideas, and they're very good at talking to themselves but really poor at listening to anybody else.

We wouldn't have to do this. Adding four words is not the end of the world, Speaker, you will say. They've made a mistake; they are correcting this. I'm all for correcting the mistakes, except that the consequences of their mistake are not going to be on them. The consequences of their mistake are going to be on those thousands of people who followed Bill 45, who brought forward, I would say, over 100—I'm going by memory—127 amendments to that bill and who saw them defeated one after the other and who looked at their business and said, "Well, for my business to still be viable, I'm going to have to do a lot of changes." So there were lots of new businesses who were selling e-cigarettes or vaporizers; there were lots of new businesses setting up. We are talking about comfort lounges that were being set up.

They followed the bill. It was kind of a nice thing, Speaker, because it was people that don't usually follow

what's going on up at Queen's Park, people that don't usually care about politics and about what we do here. They were actually following and understanding what it means to be at second reading. A ton of people asked to come as deputants—people that had never set foot at Queen's Park before. People came and gave their thoughts as to how we could make Bill 45 better. Most of it had to do with two sections of the bill, one dealing with flavoured tobacco and the other one dealing with the regulation of e-cigarettes.

But the Liberals never listened. It's as if they are the only ones in Ontario that don't know that people smoke marijuana. It's as if it came as a surprise, and now we have to do all of this. Really, Speaker? Except for the Liberals sitting in front of us, do you figure you could find one Ontarian who does not know that there are Ontarians that smoke marijuana, that there are 20,000 of them that do this with a medical licence and there are hundreds of thousands of them that do this recreationally? Apparently the Liberals didn't know this. How can you not know this? What planet do you live on?

This is a capital waste of resources. But who pays for that, Speaker? Small businesses: people who have put their hard-earned money into starting a new business. They put in time, effort and energy to make it successful. We all know that starting a small business is tough. The first few months, the first few years, are really tough. You have to invest a whole lot up front before you get any money back. Those people did everything right. They waited till Bill 45 had been debated. They brought their ideas forward, saw them all voted down by the Liberals, one after the other after the other, and then went back to the drawing board and said, "Well, for my business to be successful, I'm going to have to do some major changes. I'm going to have to do some mega investment. I'm going to have to roll up my sleeves and put in a ton of work." And they did that. They did that, and they tried to make their business thrive, and I would tell you that quite a few of them did.

Nine months later, the rules change again. Why? Because the Liberals did not listen in the first place, because the Liberals said that they had consulted and they had listened, but they hadn't heard anything, and because they refused to admit that there are good ideas outside of the Liberal Party. This is shameful. This is shameful.

There are good ideas on all sides of this House. There are good ideas in all 107 of us and in all of the people we represent. Let's take the time to listen to one another. We will do a whole lot better and we won't have to come back nine months after we've debated an issue and made changes to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and then make changes again.

Every time we make changes, somebody pays. It's not the government, it's not the Liberal Party, but it is the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario expect that if their government is going to spend seven months working on Bill 45—and way longer than this, because remember, Speaker, in 2008 I had started with banning flavoured cigarillos. I'd been elected in the general

election of 2007. My very first private member's bill was to ban flavoured cigarillos.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. I was quite proud of myself. My very first bill made it to third reading; it became law. But all for naught, because the ink was not even dry on that bill I was so proud of when the tobacco industry had already found a loophole. So right after I did my celebration, I took a deep breath and said, "Okay, we have to try again." I reintroduced bills—bill after bill after bill—to ban flavoured tobacco.

The work leading to Bill 45 really lasted seven years. In that seven years, a lot was said—a lot was said—that it was not only tobacco that needed to be regulated. But the Liberals never listened. They went at it with their view that they are Liberals, therefore they know better—but they did not. They did not. By refusing to listen, you are hurting the people of Ontario. You are hurting small businesses that don't deserve to be treated that way.

If they had listened, they would see that it is not only marijuana that needs to be regulated, but I will tell you that—maybe you won't listen to me and you won't listen to the PCs, but maybe you could listen to the Toronto Board of Health. I'm really proud to say that as of last Friday, as of April 1, the Toronto Board of Health is the first health unit in Ontario to regulate water pipes. Whether you smoke shisha or hookah pipes, the board of health has banned indoor smoking of water pipes within the greater Toronto area.

Are we going to have to come back, Speaker, and say, "Oh, yes, the first time we forgot marijuana and the second time we forgot that there are other substances that people smoke"? Right now, in Toronto, as of April 1, people are not allowed to smoke shisha and they're not allowed to smoke water pipes within the greater Toronto area. But people smoke outside of Toronto. People smoke in Sudbury and Nickel Belt, and I'm sure that they smoke in Essex and they smoke in London and in Ottawa, and everywhere else. They're mainly young people.

You look at this and the products always have this great big sign that says that this is herbal and it says that it's organic, and it leads you to believe if it's herbal and organic it must be good to smoke this stuff. This entire industry is not regulated either, so what really is in this pouch of organic and natural? We have no idea what's in there, except that the cancer society wanted to know what was in there. The cancer society did do tests on those cute little pouches of shisha that look like they are natural and organic, like there could be miracles sitting in those. No, sir. In lots of them there was nicotine, so that they could get you addicted to tobacco. In lots of them there were added products, to keep the products fresh, which are known carcinogens. Those are no good. The Toronto Board of Health recognized that and passed a bylaw. Now the regions of Peel and Niagara are looking at doing the exact same thing.

1710

Then again, I come back to here, Speaker. Why is it that we are presently opening the Smoke-Free Ontario

Act for the second time in nine months and there is nothing in there about water pipes, there is nothing in there about shisha, there is nothing in there about hookah pipes? We know this is a public health issue that is serious enough that the Toronto Board of Health passed its bylaws that are now in force, since April 1—and we have many others. Why is it that we would let 36 medical officers of health and their teams struggle through passing bylaws when we have the bill open right here, right now? For the second time in nine months, we have this bill open in front of us—but, no, they look at it one little step at a time. They don't listen to what people have to say to them.

To me, keeping people healthy is a prime responsibility of the provincial government. Health is a provincial responsibility. Why don't we have a government that takes that responsibility seriously and says that if we are going to open up a bill, we're not going to keep opening it up every nine months because things have changed? Things have not changed. Nine months ago people were smoking marijuana, and I can tell you that nine months from now there are still going to be smokers. Nine months ago there were people smoking water pipes indoors in lots of public places in Ontario, and if we don't change this, nine months from now it's not going to be any different.

Why don't they listen, Speaker? Why don't they talk to people? Why is it that they hold consultations but they've already had their minds made up? The latest example of this was when they tabled their budget. They had their budget written and sent to translation before they came up north to listen to what the people of the north had to say. The people of the north who went to Thunder Bay had to travel some great distances. If you go from Kenora, Rainy River or Dryden—those people had to prepare and miss a day or sometimes a day and a half of work to come and talk to their government about what they wanted to see in their budget. The government pretended to have a consultation to hear what they had to say, but the budget was already written. It was already sent to translation. This is how Liberals listen, and this is pretty sad.

We're seeing this pattern over and over by the Liberals, who refuse to listen, who refuse to take ideas from outside of their own party, who like to talk among themselves but refuse to listen to Ontarians.

We had many, many months when we were debating Bill 45. Of course, they called a closure motion on Bill 45, because not only do they not want to hear from Ontarians; they don't want to hear from politicians either. They had heard enough of us. They know better. They wanted this bill to move forward in a hurry.

Where are we now? Nine months later, we're in exactly the same place we were on May 28, when they passed third reading of this bill. We are back opening up the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, having to make changes. I expect better, Speaker. I expect way better than this.

My colleague from Windsor West gave us examples in her riding, but there are examples everywhere throughout

our province of small businesses that will be put out of business by what we're doing now. Don't get me wrong. I'm not encouraging smoking, but I want the rules in my province to be clear enough so that businesses know that those are the rules, and that if you follow them, you will be able to have a good business. But when we keep changing the rules, that's not a good business climate at all.

So we have this bill, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which was opened up last year at this time and received third reading through Bill 45, on May 28 last year. We now have those four words that need to be added to this bill, those four words being "prescribed products and substances." The government has made it clear that what they mean by prescribed products and substances is marijuana. If they could have put that in the last time, it would have saved a lot of people a lot of grief, but they had not.

If people are interested, there's already consultations going on, and those consultations will go on until April 24. To find out how to do a consultation, you better be good on the computer and go on the Ministry of Health website with a lot of time on your hands because they're not easy to find. If you're interested in commenting, there is an opportunity. If you don't find it, please feel free to contact us and we'll help you. In the consultations, they made it really clear that the aim of this change in the bill is to regulate marijuana.

What are we going to do? Well, we're going to do a mega change from what they had first said. First, our Premier had said that given that marijuana smokers right now, the legal ones, medical marijuana—in November, our Premier had said that people smoking medical marijuana should be allowed to smoke in any public location. They then changed their mind and realized that this might not have been such a good idea and decided to bring this bill forward. Since then, there has been a lot of confusion out there. That is not helpful either.

What we have now is, we have a very polarized discussion. It's hard to move things forward when you have let them go to the point where the conversation is very, very polarized for people for and against smoking medical marijuana in public, as well as people who have invested following the new set of rules who suddenly find themselves with their investment going up in smoke, if you'll pardon the pun on that one, Speaker.

But at the heart of it is really, what will that mean? Well, it will mean that once the bill is passed, there will be regulations that say that marijuana will not be allowed to be smoked, even for medical reasons, in any enclosed public space, in any school, in any common areas of apartment buildings, condominiums, universities or college residences. It's important here to realize that it's "common area," so in your own apartment you will be allowed to continue to use medical marijuana, but in the common area you won't be allowed—very much like tobacco, identical. You won't be allowed, either, in child care centres, in sports arenas or entertainment venues, in restaurants, bars, as well as patios of restaurants and bars, at playgrounds, in an enclosed workspace, in a vehicle

with a person under the age of 16 and within nine metres of any entrance of a hospital or long-term-care home.

1720

There are specific exemptions for testing, and there are a whole bunch of fines for people who break the law. It's \$250 if you smoke medical marijuana in a car with a passenger under 16 years of age. There is a \$1,000 fee on first conviction and \$5,000 fee on subsequent convictions if you smoke marijuana in one of those prohibited places that I have listed.

Your employer will have to ensure compliance by posting signs and making sure that nobody smokes medical marijuana within the workplace. There are stiff penalties for them. Corporations can be fined up to \$100,000, with up to \$300,000 for subsequent fines. Basically, everything that applies to tobacco will now apply to medical marijuana.

We could have done a whole lot better, Speaker, had we dealt with this sooner. But this is very typical of how health promotion is handled in this province. We used to have a Ministry of Health Promotion. I was so proud when Ontario was the first province to have a ministry dedicated to health promotion. Then in 2011, this ministry disappeared, and if you look back at how it served—not so well. It was never taken very seriously.

Right now, if you look at the efforts that many partners do to bring down the rate of smoking—I will read you a letter that I got from Claire Gignac. Claire is a nurse at Health Sciences North. This is the hospital in Sudbury. It goes on:

“Madame Gélinas,

“As Health Sciences North's tobacco treatment specialist-master, I would like to inform you that my position at Health Sciences North ... is one of the nursing positions that have been cut due to budget restraints. The good work that I have done at HSN in regard to helping all inpatients manage their nicotine addiction and managing their withdrawals will no longer be available at Health Sciences North in the next several weeks.” Many hospitals have gone down this path of helping everybody. This won't be available anymore.

“At HSN, all admitted patients are asked if they are current or recent smokers and, if so, they are offered nicotine replacement therapy upon admission. As of November 17 of last year, Health Sciences North started with a hospital-wide nicotine replacement therapy medical directive which meant that all the nursing staff had the ability to offer patch, gum, lozenges and inhalers to identified smokers.” In order to make that happen, it was her responsibility—Mrs. Claire Gignac—to ensure that all nursing staff had the right tools to do the right job. Here are some of the tools—some of the care—that she was providing:

“(1) Free nicotine replacement therapy to all admitted patients—free medication should continue, but no counselling available for patients or assistance for nursing staff when complications arise.

“(2) Free self-learning packages to all nursing staff.” It was her job, Speaker, to make sure that there were updates to “maintain the self-learning packages for nursing

staff and as a medical directive, this needs to be done every two years.” There is now nobody at Health Sciences North who has this responsibility because she lost her job, with many, many other nurses, with the cutbacks at hospitals.

“(3) Free reading materials, nicotine replacement pamphlets to patients.” She says, “I also created one for patients who smoke engaged in battle with cancer. With my not being there, who will be responsible to order and have available these materials, as well as update them as they change and create new ones as required?” Nobody will do that either.

“(4) A system that allows NRT to be dispensed in a timely fashion (NRT available in all Pyxis machines on each unit) will be available, but no tobacco specialist to update the information and education or counsel patients.

“(5) A medical directive for nursing staff allowing them to initiate NRT without having to wait for a physician's order.” Those directives need to be revisited every two years as per policy; therefore, if no one does it, it will cease to exist altogether.

“(6) An available tobacco treatment specialist in-house Monday to Friday able to assist staff and patients when situations arise.” That was her, and her position has been eliminated. This is no longer available.

“(7) A program for all staff and their families giving them an amount of \$500 each towards the purchase of approved NRT—hospital classes for these have been stopped.” There are no more classes at the hospital. “Staff now need to go to outside sources and find someone else to counsel them.” Do you know how run off their feet hospital nurses are? There is no way that they have time to reach out to somebody else in the community to deal with that.

We're missing such a good health promotion initiative. When people are admitted into the hospital, they are in a position where they're very interested in their own health. For health promotion and disease prevention to be effective, you really have to, I would say, capitalize on or take advantage of those periods where people are open to change in their lifestyle, including change in their smoking habits. Well, this is one example of what the layoff of nurses throughout our province has led to.

In my own community, it means that the nicotine replacement therapy programs that had been put in place by Health Sciences North and that had delivered good results—the results that the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is trying to do, that is, bring the number of smokers down—all of this is for none. We have lost our support.

She goes on to say, “The banning of smoking on hospital grounds”—this is something I will come back to because right now, it's only within metres of the hospital, but some municipalities have actually passed bylaws to make it municipality-wide—“has already stopped working as we are seeing more and more patients and staff smoking on grounds.” When there was someone in charge of this program, it gave it validity. It showed that if it was worth investing into, it's because it delivered results. But now she's gone and so is the effort that had

been put into this. "With the news of my leaving this position, people are already taking advantage of this situation by breaking the law ...

"You may be aware of Global Bridges with its founding partners consisting of the Mayo Clinic and American Cancer Society. Global Bridges joins forces with experienced regional partners to advance evidence-based tobacco dependence treatment and tobacco control policy. I have been honoured to have been chosen as the first Canadian introduced as their member spotlight in recognition of the work being done in the treatment of tobacco dependence in the hospital setting." She goes on to give me the link to her award.

"Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) TEACH have also recognized me as an expert in the field of tobacco cessation.

"Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario"—better known as RNAO—"have asked me to speak across the province as a specialist in this field to pre- and post-partum women regarding smoking. I have already done several full-day education days for them. I am also on an expert panel on the revision of best practice guidelines for smoking cessation when their book is updated in 2016.

"With all of this going on and the importance of my keeping my job at HSN, it is a crying shame that HSN has elected to cut my position. All of the lives that we have improved by getting people to cut down or stop smoking altogether must count for something. What about all of the other patients coming to Health Sciences North? We have the highest smoking rate in Ontario."

1730

I was giving you this example and reading this letter into the record, Speaker, because New Democrats understand that smoking cessation is important. We can cut close to 80% of all cancer if people stop smoking, exercise regularly, have a healthy weight and eat healthy food. Those are the tenets, the basis of health promotion: to get people to stop smoking, to exercise regularly, to have a healthy weight and to eat healthy food. You get this done and the population of Ontario will be so, so much healthier. The dream of our founder, the founder of medicare, Tommy Douglas, will be realized: that we keep people well.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act is a big part of that, but the Liberal government goes at it in such small pieces. It took seven years of me and many others pushing them to finally ban flavoured tobacco. The cancer society had shown us that close to 90,000 new smokers every year started to smoke because flavoured tobacco was available. I'll let you do the math, Speaker. Seven years and 90,000 people: That's 630,000 Ontarians that have started to smoke because the Liberal government was so slow in bringing a ban on flavoured tobacco.

Tobacco is the only product that, if used as directed, will kill one out of two of its users. Tobacco kills. Every time you see a room with 10 smokers, five of them will die because they are smokers. If you do the math, of all of those people who started to pick up the habit—what I

call the next generation of smokers, because we waited—over 300,000 of them will die because we dragged our feet for seven years. This is another example.

They are bringing this bill forward. Why not do more than change four words? I think there's unanimity that we can do better about contraband tobacco. Why don't we take the opportunity, while the bill is open, to put a few steps in there towards doing something about contraband tobacco? I can tell you that everywhere contraband tobacco is available, we go backwards. I can speak for my community. Contraband tobacco is widely available. All you have to do is go to Atikameksheng Anishnawbek. You can buy a carton of cigarettes for \$12. You can still buy flavoured tobacco there, too, if you're interested, not that I want to promote their sales or anything like that.

If the government was interested in speaking, in listening, in engaging—all of the things that they say they want to do but don't do—they would have come to Chief Miller of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and talked to him about if the First Nations have any ideas about contraband tobacco that would help people quit. They do, but nobody ever listened to them.

I was at the Six Nations of the Grand River, and at the Six Nations of the Grand River, it's the same thing. Once you get to the First Nations, on both sides of the street, on beautiful grounds by the river, you will see smoke shacks. I happened to stop because I had somebody with me who told me he wanted a Pepsi, but what he really wanted was cheap cigarettes. So while we are stopped there to buy a Pepsi, I go in. He does buy his Pepsi but he also buys a carton of cigarettes while he's in there. Damien, you know who you are.

We got to look around. It was the exact same. You could buy the equivalent of a carton of cigarettes, but in a baggie, for \$12. You could buy a carton of just about any brand of cigarette for between \$24 and \$26. We know that this cheap price encourages people to smoke.

My colleague talked about—I forget what they're called—the corner store association of Ontario. I don't think I have that title right but you get the—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Convenience stores.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The convenience stores association of Ontario—thank you—looked at how much contraband cigarettes are being smoked in Ontario. The statistics speak for themselves. In my riding, it's close to 50%. In some areas of my riding, it is as high as 60% and 80%. You know what that means? That means that, in all of Ontario, the smoking rate is at 18%. In my riding, the smoking rate is at 28%.

When you go to other areas where contraband tobacco is readily available, you see the same statistics. You see that, although we may take a few steps forward to help people quit, there are gaping holes in the regulations. One of those gaping holes is contraband tobacco. The Auditor General was telling us that we are missing out on \$1 billion worth of taxes. If we were to have our fair share of taxes on all the contraband tobacco that she was able to identify, there would be \$1 billion more coming in.

Not that I want to make money on the backs of smokers—I'd much rather they quit smoking. But rather than increasing the deductible of seniors to pay for their drugs and increasing the copayment of seniors to pay for their drugs, I think I would much rather we go after contraband tobacco and make sure that they pay their fair share and make sure that we don't have areas of our province where 28% of the people smoke. When 28% of the people smoke, that means that 14% of them will die because they were smokers.

In my area, we all know people who have died of lung cancer. It's not a pretty death. They are people who are really sick and need our support. Sometimes, because they were smokers, people discriminate against them at their worst time. Here you have people who are very, very sick because of a nicotine addiction, but rather than having people rally around them to help them through this awful disease, people discriminate against them because they were smokers. Those people were smokers, but what they really had was an addiction to nicotine.

That brings me a little bit to the next step. Remember that we just opened up the Smoke-Free Ontario Act? We finally banned flavoured tobacco, but we left a loophole in there. Remember the first time I introduced a bill that banned flavoured tobacco? There was a loophole in there.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Menthol.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No. The first time it was describing a cigarillo, and the tobacco industry was on me in seconds.

In this particular bill, sure, we have banned flavoured tobacco, but we did not ban menthol. By not banning menthol, we have now opened this loophole that there is still some flavoured tobacco out there because the government goes at it in such small steps. It didn't matter that the cancer society, the Lung Association, the nurses' association, the medical association and public health all told them that you had to ban menthol. No. They are Liberals. They know better than the cancer society and they know better than every other expert in the field, and they did not do that.

I don't know why. Why is it so hard to get them to do something in health promotion? I don't know. But I just read a letter from a nurse that was dedicated to health promotion and disease prevention in a hospital. She has lost her job. She is as qualified as it comes in Ontario and in Canada, has won awards from everywhere, and we can't even keep her employed. She is unemployed, with all of those skills—something we need so much of. But it doesn't matter; there is very little interest from this government about health promotion.

1740

I also want to talk to you about the Ottawa Council on Smoking or Health. The Ottawa council has written to the Minister of Health, to basically anybody who would listen, and they cc'd me. They talked about smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke on hospital campuses. Basically—this is a long letter, so I'm not going to read all of it into the record.

"The Ottawa Council on Smoking or Health ... is a ... volunteer organization that aims to create a social en-

vironment where non-smoking is the norm; to assist in establishing smoke-free environments; to prevent youth from starting to smoke; to encourage smokers to quit; and to advocate for better smoking cessation resources."

They are writing to Minister Hoskins, the chair of the board of the Ontario Hospital Association, and the president and CEO of the hospital association, asking about smoking by visitors and staff on outdoor campuses at the Ottawa Hospital. They are "writing in regards to ongoing complaints that we have received from patients and visitors about:

"—smoking by hospital visitors and staff on outdoor campuses of the Ottawa Hospital;

"—exposure to second-hand smoke at entranceways at the three campuses of the Ottawa Hospital.

"—second-hand smoke drifting into emergency departments due to smoking at entranceways;

"—cigarette butt litter on the hospital campuses."

They go on to basically ask, while Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, was open, while we were talking about the smoking bill, why didn't we include measures to make hospital campuses 100% smoke-free? There are a number of municipalities that have done that: Elliot Lake, Mattawa, North Bay, Parry Sound, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie, Stratford, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Woodstock, Sudbury—anyway, a whole bunch. But why don't we put it into the law?

I think there are 444 municipalities in Ontario. Rather than leaving 444 municipalities in Ontario to struggle to bring this forward, why don't we as legislators do this? The bill is open right now. We have an opportunity to make changes to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Why don't we do this? Why do we have to take such small steps when it comes to health promotion?

When we talk about the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, basically, what we want is to de-normalize smoking. We want to make sure that the number of smokers in Ontario continues to go down. We've had some success in bringing the number of smokers down, but right now we are sort of losing this battle, and it's going up the other way. Why? Everybody knows the link between smoking and lung disease, specifically lung cancer.

There is another substance that really increases your risk of lung cancer, and this is radon. Radon is a colourless, odorless, tasteless radioactive gas found naturally in the environment. It is released into the air during the natural breakdown of uranium in rocks and soil. Once released, radon breaks down into radioactive elements that can attach to dust and other substances in the air that we breathe. It is also a common type of radiation exposure.

We are exposed to radon when we breathe in contaminated air. You may be exposed to radon-contaminated air for various reasons. The first one is indoor air. It can have a high level of radon when radon is found in the soil and rocks around the home. It seeps in and builds up in enclosed spaces that are poorly ventilated. Health Canada recommends that the indoor radon levels should be kept low. I'm talking about this, Speaker, because

right now there is a private member's bill to do this which was brought by a Liberal member. If we are serious that we want to prevent people from dying of lung cancer, if we are serious that we want to prevent illness, why don't we take this opportunity?

We're talking about a bill that will protect people from second-hand smoke—in this case, marijuana smoke. We are talking about a bill that will regulate where people can smoke medical marijuana so that other people are not exposed, so that workers are not exposed, so that we take steps toward preventing lung cancer and lung diseases. Why don't we take this opportunity to do more than that tiny little step? Why don't we take this opportunity to do more than just add four words to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act? Why don't we take this opportunity to pass, or even include in what we have to do, the radon bill that has been moved forward?

I come from Nickel Belt. Nickel Belt is the heart of the Canadian Shield. That means that everywhere you look, you see rocks. When you think of Nickel Belt, you think about hardrock mining. We have lots of mines that go deep into hard, hard rock. Our houses are also built on those rocks. You can go through many parts of Sudbury and Nickel Belt and you will find people who have rocks in their basements. It is so expensive to dynamite and get rid of the rock that people anchor their houses on rocks. I have a 12-year-old house that we built ourselves, and half of my house has a crawl space because we are built on a rock. That happens to many, many houses. As the houses move, the chances for this radon gas to come into our homes are really high. I knew about this because I come from health promotion. I made sure that we had the rock sealed properly and a good ventilation system. But for many of the other houses, especially what we call the old Inco houses and the older houses in Sudbury, those rocks are there. The drilling and blasting continues to happen throughout our town. We are a prime location for radon to come into our basements. Who goes into the basements? Kids play down there. Teenagers watch movies. More and more people turn their downstairs into a TV room or a movie room or a playroom. This is how people get exposed.

We have a very high rate of lung cancer in Sudbury and Nickel Belt. Sure, a lot of this has to do with the fact that 28% of the people are smokers; there is no doubt about it. But I'm sure that for a big portion of the people who develop cancer, it's because they have radon in their houses.

As we are moving forward with a bill that looks at health promotion, a bill that looks at protecting people from second-hand smoke, a bill that looks at regulating medical marijuana smoking, I wish that we would do more than that; that we would take health promotion seriously and take every opportunity for this House to be proactive. There is so much more that we can do.

How long have we been talking about trans fat? How long have we been talking about this partially hydrogenated oil and taking it out of our food supply? Our neighbours to the south have passed laws to do this. Why is it that Ontario is not proactive? We could save between

1,000 and 1,800 heart attacks a year if we were to ban this. We could save between \$250 million and \$450 million to our economy if we were to ban trans fats in our food supply. If other legislatures have been able to do this, why isn't Ontario doing that?

1750

I talked about this because we don't have very many opportunities to talk about health promotion in this House. Not very often do we have an opportunity to talk about health promotion. But when it comes, it comes in such tiny, weeny little steps. How are we ever going to walk this long road when we only take those little steps?

During the last constituency break, I had the pleasure to go and visit with my local cancer society. I think they're called the Sudbury branch of the Ontario cancer society. I met with Cathy Burns, Sonia De Missier and Lindsey Jones. They brought forward their top three and two of those—the first one was radon and the second one was HPV for boys.

The province of Ontario does have the HPV vaccine for girls, but contrary to many other provinces, such as Prince Edward Island, Alberta, Nova Scotia and Quebec, we don't include boys. I don't know why, because HPV stands for "human papilloma virus." Basically, we have a vaccine now that can be a strong weapon in cancer prevention and that should be part of any well-rounded health promotion strategy to decrease the risk and increase screening. But here again, Ontario did one step but didn't go all the way through.

HPV infections can cause cancer in males and females. It will affect three in four Canadians during their lifetime. HPV infection is linked to a number of cancers, such as penile, cervical, anal, oral cavity and oral pharyngeal cancer. To help reduce the risk, the Canadian Cancer Society, as well as the people who I met with in Sudbury and several leading public health organizations, recommends that males and females receive the HPV vaccine.

Here again, it's an example of what the province could do that would be, yes, an investment upfront, but that shows huge dividends down the road. Whether we talk about—I'll name a couple—contraband tobacco; whether we talk about having staff within our hospitals to help people quit smoking; whether we talk about radon or trans fats; whether we talk about dental care—remember, there was money dedicated to getting low-income Ontarians access to dental care. Well, we are not moving on this issue, and it's a real shame.

We could do so, so much better. Right now, we have close to 61,000 visits to the ER—that was in 2014—for dental problems. All that the ER can do is give you painkillers. That means that every nine minutes, there is someone in Ontario who visits an emergency room for a dental issue and all they will get will be painkillers.

There are 218,000 visits to family physicians for dental issues. Here again, they will get painkillers but no treatment. We could save \$37 million a year if we give people on low incomes access.

I know that I have to wrap up, Speaker, but the message I really want them to understand is that there are good ideas on all sides of the House; that when the

Liberals only talk to themselves, they make mistakes. They make mistakes like the mistake they made when they called closure on Bill 45 and moved it forward without those four words. Don't tell me that on May 28, 2015, people did not know that we had 20,000 medical marijuana smokers in this province, and that we had hundreds of thousands more recreational marijuana smokers in this province.

And yet, it didn't matter that those issues were brought forward. It didn't matter that those issues were shared with them. They were not willing to listen. They voted down every amendment to Bill 45, and they went ahead with what they wanted to do. I would even add that you have some pretty good people who work in health promotion within your ministry. Why don't you listen to them? They also brought those things forward to you. Had you listened to your own staff, we would not be here right now, because they told you about this. But here again, the Liberals refused to listen. Many people will pay the price for having a piece of legislation opened twice in a period of nine months, and this is a real shame.

Ça me fait toujours plaisir d'avoir l'opportunité de dire quelques mots au sujet de ce projet de loi. C'est un projet de loi qui est extrêmement simple. On rajoute quatre mots à un projet de loi pour permettre de mettre des règles sur l'utilisation de la marijuana pour des fins médicales.

Maintenant, les gens qui utilisent la marijuana pour des fins médicales n'auront plus le droit de la fumer, sauf dans les endroits où on a le droit de fumer la cigarette. Malheureusement, c'est une « issue » maintenant qui est devenue très polarisée.

On avait la chance de faire changer cette loi-là l'année dernière, lorsqu'on parlait du projet de loi 45. On a manqué cette opportunité, et pendant ce temps-là, les commerces et les Ontariens pensaient que tout était pour aller de l'avant. Maintenant, un nouveau projet de loi a

été mis de l'avant, et la marijuana pour des fins médicales va être réglementée en Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Le Président suppléant (M. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup.

CONCUSSIONS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I actually have two points of order, and they're probably not points of order, but please indulge me, Speaker.

I'll also raise this tomorrow morning, but one of the events that will happen before question period is that Eric Lindros will be joining me tomorrow in the media studio to talk about concussions. I would like to invite all members of this assembly to join us; and at 11:30 until 12:30, I would like to invite all members to a members-only event with Eric Lindros, a hockey legend, as well as a few other professional athletes, in the side room at the legislative dining room.

MEMBERS' BIRTHDAYS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Now for my second point of order, Speaker; I don't know if I have to sit down and rise again. I wanted to wish two very special people to me a happy birthday: My seatmate, Mr. Jim Wilson, and of course you, Mr. Speaker, while you're in the Chair. Happy birthday.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Those were not points of order, but they were appreciated nonetheless.

It is 6 o'clock and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor	8357
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8357

Agri-food industry

Ms. Ann Hoggarth	8357
Hon. Jeff Leal	8357

Drive Clean

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	8358
Hon. Charles Sousa	8358
Hon. Glen R. Murray	8358

First responders

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	8358
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8359

Visitors

Hon. Mitzie Hunter	8359
Mr. Arthur Potts	8359

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder), 2016, Bill 163, Mr. Flynn / Loi de 2016 d'appui aux premiers intervenants de l'Ontario (état de stress post- traumatique), projet de loi 163, M. Flynn

Third reading agreed to	8359
-------------------------------	------

Waste-Free Ontario Act, 2016, Bill 151, Mr. Murray / Loi de 2016 favorisant un Ontario sans déchets, projet de loi 151, M. Murray

Second reading agreed to	8360
--------------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Charlie Guy

Mr. Steve Clark	8361
-----------------------	------

Fire in Pikangikum

Ms. Sarah Campbell	8361
--------------------------	------

Pope John Paul II

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	8361
----------------------------	------

Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization

Mr. Bill Walker	8361
-----------------------	------

The Bridge

Mr. Paul Miller	8362
-----------------------	------

Economic symposium / Symposium économique

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8362
---------------------------------	------

Steve Merker

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	8362
----------------------------	------

Leon Korbee

Mr. John Fraser	8363
-----------------------	------

Events in Port Hope

Mr. Lou Rinaldi	8363
-----------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	8363
Report deemed adopted	8363

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8363
Debate adjourned	8363

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Bud Monahan Guitar Sales & Service Ltd. Act, 2016, Bill Pr41, Mrs. Martow

First reading agreed to	8364
-------------------------------	------

MOTIONS

Private members' public business

Hon. James J. Bradley	8364
Motion agreed to	8364

Appointment of Deputy Speaker

Hon. James J. Bradley	8364
Motion agreed to	8364

Committee membership

Hon. James J. Bradley	8364
Motion agreed to	8364

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

World Autism Awareness Day / Journée mondiale de la sensibilisation à l'autisme

Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8364
Ms. Sylvia Jones	8366
Miss Monique Taylor	8366

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Hydro rates	
Mr. Ted Arnott.....	8367
Workplace safety	
Mr. Percy Hatfield	8367
Sexual violence and harassment	
Ms. Daiene Vernile.....	8368
Health care funding	
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	8368
Special-needs students	
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8368
Prompt payment	
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	8368
Ontario Drug Benefit Program	
Mr. Wayne Gates.....	8369
Hospital funding	
Mr. Jim Wilson	8369
Éducation postsecondaire en français	
Mme France Gélinas.....	8369
Special-needs students	
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	8369
Health care funding	
Mr. Percy Hatfield	8369
Special-needs students	
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	8370

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, 2016, Bill 178, Ms. Damerla / Loi de 2016 modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée, projet de loi 178, Mme Damerla	
Hon. Glen R. Murray	8370
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	8372
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	8373
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8373
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	8373
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	8374
Hon. Glen R. Murray	8374
Ms. Laurie Scott	8374
Mr. Percy Hatfield	8377
Hon. Dipika Damerla.....	8378
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	8378
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8378
Ms. Laurie Scott	8379
Mme France Gélinas.....	8379
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	8386
Concussions	
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	8386
Members' birthdays	
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	8386

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 5 April 2016 / Mardi 5 avril 2016

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder), 2016, Bill 163, Mr. Flynn / Loi de 2016 d'appui aux premiers intervenants de l'Ontario (état de stress post- traumatique), projet de loi 163, M. Flynn

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8343
Mr. Patrick Brown.....	8343
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	8344
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8345
Third reading vote deferred.....	8345

Waste-Free Ontario Act, 2016, Bill 151, Mr. Murray / Loi de 2016 favorisant un Ontario sans déchets, projet de loi 151, M. Murray

Mr. John Fraser	8346
Vote deferred.....	8347

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8347
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	8347
Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	8347
Mr. Robert Bailey	8347
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8347
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8347
Hon. Bill Mauro	8347
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	8347
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	8347
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	8347
Mrs. Laura Albanese	8347
Mr. Joe Dickson	8347
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8347
Hon. Reza Moridi.....	8348
Ms. Daiene Vernile	8348
Ms. Eleanor McMahon.....	8348
Mr. Todd Smith.....	8348
Hon. David Oraziatti	8348
Mr. Grant Crack	8348
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8348
Mrs. Kathryn McGarry.....	8348
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	8348
Mme Gila Martow.....	8348
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	8348
Ms. Sophie Kiwala.....	8348
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	8348

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	8348
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	8348

Wearing of ribbons

Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8348
-----------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Autism treatment

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	8348
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8349
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8349

Fundraising

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	8350
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8350
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8350

Fundraising

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	8351
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8351

Fundraising

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	8351
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8352

Autism treatment

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	8352
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8353

Fundraising

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	8353
Hon. Charles Sousa	8353

Refugees

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	8354
Hon. Michael Chan	8354
Hon. Eric Hoskins	8354

Renewable energy

Mr. John Yakabuski	8354
Hon. Brad Duguid	8354

Collective bargaining

Mme France Gélinas	8355
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8355

Government services

Mr. Arthur Potts	8355
Hon. David Oraziatti	8355

Fundraising

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	8356
Hon. Charles Sousa	8356

Continued on inside back cover



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First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)



Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 6 April 2016

Mercredi 6 avril 2016

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Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 April 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 avril 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 5, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last sat, the member from Nickel Belt had finished her comments. It is now time for questions and comments.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House to discuss our government's Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act this morning. Typically, I think, when we think of smoking, we think in terms of cigarettes, cigars and tobacco but, obviously, it also applies to other products and other substances. One of those products, one of those substances that is in the newspaper a lot lately and is being regulated in other jurisdictions, is medical marijuana, but because the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is currently in place in the province of Ontario—which I believe enjoys the support of all parties in this House—we also need to bring in a few rules that are going to apply to other products or substances, the example being medical marijuana.

What we believe on this side of the House, simply, Speaker, is that it's time we expanded the Smoke-Free Ontario Act so that it also allows the government to prescribe products and substances other than tobacco to be subject to the terms of the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act that talks to the no-smoking provisions. With the help of this legislation, the government is going to prescribe, through its regulations, medical marijuana as one of the substances that is subject to the current Smoke-Free Ontario Act's no-smoking rules. What it is doing, certainly, is it's taking a piece of what I think is popular legislation and it's updating it to changes that are taking place in our society today.

What it would mean is that a person who was smoking something like medical marijuana for medical reasons

would have to do that in certain places and could not do it in workplaces, could not do it in enclosed workplaces, in public places that are enclosed. The same health risks we recognized with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act should also apply to new substances as they emerge. Really, in my opinion, this is a sensible amendment to existing legislation and should be supported by all members of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: First of all, I want to commend the member from the third party on her hour lead-off yesterday. It shows the tenure, experience and passion that she brings to her position. Her constituents are very fortunate. You couldn't help last evening but be moved by her continuous, consistent effort to make Ontario healthy—and I applaud her for that—from reducing flavoured tobacco to going up against the Liberal government when they wouldn't be listened to with regard to making Ontario healthier, with regard to being smoke-free, with regard to her comments around the need to address different cancers. Again, I commend her; her constituents are very lucky.

Specifically to this bill, Bill 178, the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, we have to call it for what it is. This is an effort by a tired government that made a mistake initially, and they're trying to clean up their act. As they are cleaning up their mistake that they made in their efforts to make Ontario smoke-free, I would suggest to them and invite them to continue cleaning up their mistakes. For instance, why on earth are we affording and awarding proponents of wind farms more opportunity to pollute the countryside with a source of energy that we cannot afford and we absolutely do not need? It baffles so many people as to why this government continues to choose to make mistake after mistake.

But we have seen this government backtrack before. Just yesterday—apparently, they're stepping back from their effort to pull more dollars out of seniors' pockets by backtracking on the prescription directive they were taking. They have time to clean up the Green Energy Act as well. I encourage them to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always a pleasure to stand up in the House and contribute to a debate that our health critic from Nickel Belt has given her lead on, because she does her homework. I've been talking to the member from Nickel Belt, and she expresses the concern

that this bill is really a correction of an error on this government's part.

During the consultation process on Bill 45, stakeholders came forward to express their concerns about this very issue, and rather than the government paying attention and listening to deputations and people's presentations, they decided to shut them out. This is what this government has been doing in many examples, just like seniors' Ontario drug benefits. They decided that they were going to increase the deductible from \$100 to \$170 for seniors. What happened? There's an outcry and this government has now put a pause on it; the same example here. This is really rudimentary, in a sense. We're here debating this bill because this government isn't listening to people when there are consultations.

Now we're talking about regulating tobacco and prescribed products and substances. We know second-hand smoke is not good for the public at large. Yet now we have to debate this, knowing this is something that could have been worked into Bill 45. It's disappointing; it's really disappointing. It's always important, though, to talk about health prevention, which I know our critic supports very much. Anti-second-hand smoke is making sure we have health promotion in public places.

The effectiveness of this bill is going to be that it's going to protect employees, customers and bystanders from exposure to second-hand marijuana smoke.

I'm glad we're debating this bill, but it's disappointing that we're debating it because this government didn't listen to the original Bill 45 consultations on how this important issue should have been incorporated into Bill 45.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I look forward to speaking briefly on this bill, but I think I'll speak in a little bit more detail later on. I just wanted to highlight that I'm a very strong proponent and supporter of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

I have the great distinction of coming from a city, Ottawa, where we were the first city to actually outlaw smoking in public places, in restaurants. That was a very controversial issue at the time. I believe the Attorney General, the member from Ottawa-Vanier, was on city council, and the member from Ottawa West-Nepean, the Minister of Energy, was the mayor at that time.

0910

They really broke ground in Ontario and in Canada, I would say, by being the first jurisdiction to make sure that people were not allowed to smoke in public spaces. It has resulted, I can tell you, in a much healthier city and an environment where people thrive—businesses, in fact, are thriving even more—because they are able to go and enjoy their time. Ottawa then took another big step as a leader by saying that outdoor spaces like patios be excluded as well. Again, that was the right move.

So I'm really happy, Speaker, that under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act we continue to take a leadership role and, through this legislation, are expanding the scope of the legislation from tobacco products to other products as well, so that we can ensure that people continue to breathe

and live and enjoy themselves in a healthy environment, and that they will not be exposed to second-hand smoke, not just from tobacco but from other products and substances as well, like medical marijuana. Of course, we have to respect other people and their rights, but we need to make sure that we do so in a way that we all continue to breathe in a healthy environment. I look forward to expanding a little bit more on this issue when I get the opportunity to talk on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nickel Belt has two minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Bill 178, as I said, is a very small bill. All the bill will do is change four words in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and add "prescribed products and substances." Speaker, we just spent seven months working specifically on the Smoke-Free Ontario Act when we were talking about Bill 45. Bill 45 just ended on May 29, 2015. It hasn't even been nine months since we had worked on this bill for seven months—changed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act—and now we're back at it again.

Why are we back at it again, Speaker? Because the Liberals refused to listen. People were not only smoking tobacco, Speaker; people are smoking shisha, they are smoking medical marijuana, they are smoking many other products. All of those deputants came and told us this while we were doing the work on Bill 45. But the Liberals knew it all. The Liberals had their way; they had their bill. It did not matter how many amendments we made—over hundreds—they voted them all down. They refused to listen; they knew it all.

Now, nine months later, we have to go back and fix it. It's not going to cost them anything, but during that period of time, businesses have been set up. People invested their money, time, effort and energy building up those new businesses because we had passed a piece of legislation and the regulation was finally clear. All of those businesses will go under and will have to fail, will have to fold, and this is on their record. They were willing to bail out the gas plants. Will they be bailing out all of those small businesses that will go under because of their lack of listening? I hope so, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Children and Youth Services and also the government House leader. It's a pleasure to speak to the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act.

Before I get to that, I want to say happy birthday to my mother, who is at home; I'm not sure if she is watching. I'll see you on the weekend, Mom. I love you. My mother is a smoker—sorry, Mom, was—and I've outed her. A bit more about that later, but I would like to mention it, because it's an important part of what I want to talk about today.

Of course this Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act is going to provide us with the opportunity, through regulation, to be able to add products to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ensure that we treat products that could cause

harm to people in the same way we're doing with tobacco.

I would like to say a couple of words about a few colleagues of mine: Phil McNeely, who was the member from Ottawa-Orléans; the Minister of Energy, Bob Chiarelli, who was the mayor of Ottawa at the time; and Rob Cushman, who was the medical officer of health. I remember the work they did to stop smoking in restaurants. That's some 10, 15 years ago. At the time, the sky was going to fall. Businesses were going to go out of business, restaurants were going to have a hard time, bars were going to have a hard time. Indeed, the exact opposite happened.

I want to go back to my mom. My mom quit smoking more than 40 years ago. Sorry, Mom. You were 20—not quite. But here's the thing: Forty years ago, my mother, who is a registered nurse, knew smoking wasn't good for her and wasn't good for the family, and so she quit smoking. So did my father at the time. He quit smoking as well. That's 40 years ago. You're roughly looking around 1986.

As you take a look at smoking legislation and how it has progressed since that time, how slowly it progressed through the 1980s and through the 1990s and through successive levels of government, and our attitudes toward that, when we all knew that smoking provided a serious, serious health risk—we really didn't do very much.

It wasn't until things started to happen at the turn of this last century—in 2001, 2002 and 2003, and then the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, things began to happen. Then my colleague from Ottawa-Orléans at the time, Phil McNeely, the former member, had a private member's bill banning power walls, which was very important to ensure that young people did not begin the habit of smoking. I congratulate him on that, and the Minister of Health. It was an important measure going forward.

Smoking legislation has been something that's been incremental over a period of time. I take the member from Nickel Belt's admonitions—I don't want to take them to heart; I'm just saying I can understand a certain level of frustration. But I do want to say that over a period of time, successive governments of successive stripes have incrementally improved legislation to protect the health of Ontarians. The finger-wagging is not really helpful, and that kind of goes both ways. So I'm not wagging mine right now, but what I do want to say is we have a bill in front of us that's going to enable us to be able to—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: It's not a terrible piece of legislation. There are important measures with regard to protecting people from second-hand smoke. I think we have to take a serious look at vaping. Let's go back 60 years ago, when people were telling us, "Yes, smoking's okay. It's good for you." We used to have studies that said smoking is good for you. So let's take a deliberate and thoughtful look at what's out there and have this legislation passed so we can implement those regulations that we deem necessary to protect Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support this piece of legislation and I cede my time over to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm pleased to join in the dialogue to talk about the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which will provide that no-smoking rules will apply to products and substances other than tobacco.

I think, as a number of members have commented, things have evolved. Attitudes have changed about smoking over time. When I was growing up, my dad smoked—and he was a firefighter. So that was like double smoke. There was the smoke from cigarettes in the house, and then there was the smell of smoke when he came home from being on call as a Toronto firefighter.

Fast-forward to the year I graduated from university—I think that was 1986—and I started my career as an Ontario government intern. What were people doing in their offices then? Smoking—smoking in Ontario government offices. But that was acceptable. It had been going on for quite a bit of time.

Then we had that transition that banned smoking in workplaces. It was a hard transition for some people, but over time, and especially based on what we learned about second-hand smoke, people got with the program, so to speak, just like they did with using seat belts and so on.

0920

Then, of course, we had the smoking sections. You all remember those: smoking sections in coffee shops and various spots. Even in hospitals there were smoking sections. There were smoking spots even on high school properties. We had a smokers' corner at West Hill Collegiate in Scarborough, where I went, where everyone went out to smoke. There was a smoking section outside the building in the Ferguson Block, in the Macdonald Block, where I worked when I first started my career. So things have changed.

Now, of course, things like smoking in cars and other places are generally viewed as completely unacceptable. So times change, attitudes change, and all of this is backed by what the experts tell us, and that's important.

Now, of course, it's important to our health. This is a very important piece of legislation to me, as the Minister of Children and Youth Services, because we want all of our children and youth to grow up happy and healthy and not to suffer ill effects of second-hand smoke.

Some people have raised questions about the existing framework but, as I said, things have changed over time. For example, the number of people in Canada who are legally able to possess marijuana for medical purposes under that federal framework is rising, and since the most common method of consumption of medical marijuana is indeed smoking, businesses and employers were grappling with how to provide safeguards for their patrons and for their employees exposed to second-hand medical marijuana smoke.

Also, the exemption we proposed for medical marijuana users under the Electronic Cigarettes Act triggered a number of events that really started a public debate. It

started a public debate about the acceptability of smoking or vaping and so on. Of course, we all know, too, that the federal government has committed to legalizing marijuana in Canada, which has heightened further discussion, public stakeholder interest and the controls that governments have to put in place to protect people from potential health harms associated with marijuana, be it medical or otherwise.

So things evolve, things change, and that is what we're here to do as legislators: to make sure that our legislation evolves and changes, given the realities of what's going on, not just in Ontario but in Canada, quite frankly, and what the experts are saying.

We do believe it has come to be the time to make some changes to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act that will enable the government to proscribe products and substances other than tobacco that would be subject to the no-smoking provisions. I think Ontarians get that. I think people in my community get that. I see this as very much the evolution of what has been going on in our society, what's been going on in terms of changing attitudes and what we know in terms of how smoking affects our health outcomes at the end of the day.

Thank you for this time, Speaker, and I look forward to listening to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for acknowledging me. I'm very glad to join the member from Ottawa South and the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the minister responsible for women's issues to talk about this very important bill, Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

As I just mentioned briefly before, I'm very proud to come from the city of Ottawa and represent the community of Ottawa Centre, which has taken a leadership role when it comes to ensuring that our public spaces are healthy for everyone, that our public spaces are free from the negative impact of second-hand smoking.

Ottawa is a city that has taken that leadership role through its municipal council in banning smoking in public spaces, restaurants, and in bars, in particular. It was not an easy decision. It was very, very controversial at the time, as many may recall. But it has been a decision that has not only been very popular but, I would also say, it has been a decision that has impacted, in a positive way, the health of the citizens of Ottawa. It has also resulted in businesses growing because they have now been able to attract more people to come in because they have that healthy environment to present.

Similarly, Ottawa most recently took another very important leadership stand—and I'm very happy that it was incorporated in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act—and that was to prohibit smoking in outdoor spaces like patios. We know how important patios are. They are enclosed spaces, and the impact of second-hand smoking has been the same. Again, it was a very popular decision that has resulted in healthier places to live. That ban includes parks etc. as well.

I think the times that we live in right now, the conversation that is starting to take place when it comes to the use and the acceptance of using medical marijuana, which is allowed by law—the conversation that the federal government has embarked on, on taking the prohibition away from the recreational use of marijuana, really makes it imperative that we have this conversation now as to where those products can be used and what kind of second-hand impact it will have on other people, all the bystanders who may not use those products.

So I think what we are doing through this bill is what Ontario should be doing: taking a leadership role. We're actually really setting the standard when it comes to other products and substances, where they can be used and in what circumstances they can be used in public spaces. We're not telling people not to use it; that is not our place. What we can do, which is our role as legislators, is to make sure others are protected in our environment and in our community. That discussion around the use of medical marijuana, or the practice of the use of medical marijuana, and now the potential use of recreational marijuana, makes it very, very important. When I'm speaking to my constituents in my community, this is an issue that is coming up. It's a conversation that is taking place on a regular basis.

As many know, I knock on doors in my community every weekend on Saturdays. I'm out talking to constituents, and this is a conversation we're having. And I will also be frank with you, Speaker: You hear both sides. I would say a majority of my constituents in my community of Ottawa Centre very much support legislation like this. They want to make sure that they are shielded from the second-hand impact of the use of medical marijuana or recreational marijuana. They appreciate the leadership role that the provincial government is taking in a proactive manner to ensure that the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is not just limited to tobacco products and that it actually is expanded in its scope.

But I want to acknowledge that there are others who think this may be going too far, especially those who use medical marijuana, because there is a medical reason for them to use it. I acknowledge that, and very quickly, I want to address that by saying of course this bill does not prevent them or prohibit them from using medical marijuana for medical purposes, as has been prescribed to them by their medical practitioner. What it is doing is limiting where they can use that product.

Just as we are concerned about the health of the individual who has been prescribed the use of medical marijuana, we also as legislators have to think about and be concerned with the health of others in their surroundings who would be exposed to second-hand smoke. We know that our restaurants and our public places are open to our children, open to other elders and seniors—all kinds of people, vulnerable or not. We have a duty and an obligation to make sure that we look to their well-being and health as well.

In my opinion, this bill is doing something very simple. This bill is doing something thoughtful. What this

bill is doing is taking leadership in a very real discussion that is taking place in our country, and that is to make sure that, just like the kind of regime we have created around smoking in public spaces, we extend that prohibition to other products and substances as well, such as the use of marijuana, medical or recreational—whenever that second part becomes legal.

Speaker, I think this is the right thing to do. We know the benefits from the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and how it has resulted in a healthier province. I think we stand on solid ground from an evidentiary point of view, that we are making the right public policy choice. I really encourage all members to support this bill, because I think Ontarians support this approach. I look forward to voting in support of this bill, and I urge other members to do the same.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise to bring the thoughts of my constituents in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Bill 45 was rushed through with a lack of consultation, and now we see the results of that: the government coming back to fill in some of the holes. We see that in so many bills in this House.

I sit on committee; I think we're going through Bill 172. There's a perception of wanting to listen if stakeholders come through, but, really, there are a lot of important amendments that are being pushed out of the way. You have a government that doesn't seem to want to listen. It shouldn't take an embarrassment to force them to come back, with people screaming and, in this case, laughing at some of the mistakes that have been made here.

We see it. I think the member from Huron–Bruce talked about the Green Energy Act and the promise in my riding and across the province that they would listen to the local groups. It was an oversight; they were taking a lot of pressure. "If you're an unwilling host, we won't go there." Of course, in North Stormont and in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell: two installations in areas that were unwilling hosts. Communities that put their faith in what the Liberal government said of course have been burned. It's too bad.

We'll go through a lot of important legislation over the next few weeks. The cap-and-trade bill is being pushed through. I hope they listen to some of the stakeholders that are coming through and clearly saying they're worried about the effects on our economy and our ability in the future, if we don't get it right, to actually make a difference. They're pushing it through, and we see that it's clearly only a tax because they're out of money. That shouldn't be what this bill is all about. It should be about reducing carbon. We'll work to see that our stakeholders are heard when we move to that bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always a pleasure and an honour to be able to stand in this House and to have a few

moments to comment on a government bill that has been brought forward. It's been said many times already in this House that this bill is only before us because of the government's lack of due diligence when it came to making sure that it got the first bill, Bill 45, right.

This bill adds four words, "prescribed products and substances," to Bill 45. Quite frankly, it's just an amendment to the bill that was before us.

It was interesting to listen to some of the government members speak to this bill. The Minister for Children and Youth Services talked about how this bill is important to make sure that people are happy and healthy—and the ill effects of second-hand smoke. She talks about people being happy and healthy. I wish she would feel the same way when it came to children over the age of five who suffer from autism.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That's not what we're talking about this morning.

Miss Monique Taylor: But it is a health consideration, Minister.

I've obviously picked a bone, Speaker. As you can see, the autism effect on people in this province has filtered long and far. I hope she's read the letters that I have delivered to her so that she can hear from families first-hand of their situation of happy and healthy, and how they're feeling about that. We know very well that IBI is most effective between the ages of two and four, but it does not mean that it is not effective at all after the age of five.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, this is fantastic to have this much—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: On a point of order, Speaker: I'm completely unclear about what the member is talking about and what that has to do with the bill at hand, which is the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. I'm happy to talk to her about her other issues any time, getting a briefing, but I don't know what this conversation has to do with the bill in front of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister is correct.

Your time is up. I would suggest to the member from Hamilton Mountain that she stick to the agenda. All members know, if they have a problem, they can stand up on a point of order at any time. Instead of yelling at the Speaker, they might want to stand up.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I did.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You did finally, after a while.

Anyway, questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's great to be here this Wednesday morning. I would love to come into the Legislature at 9 o'clock in the morning one day and actually have the opposition stand up and say, "You know what? You guys are doing a great thing."

This bill is so simple. We're talking about smoking and we're talking about tobacco-based products. We're

talking about keeping people healthy here in the province of Ontario. If the opposition can't see clearly—well, you know what? I don't know what they've been reading or what they've been—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I think this is a pretty simple piece of proposed legislation. This is about keeping Ontarians healthy; it's about keeping Ontarians safe. To add to what the House leader was saying about going into local schools and talking to young children: When you go into the schools and talk about the role of an MPP, I always use the smoke-free Ontario example as one of the things we can do as lawmakers here in the Legislature to keep people safe. It wasn't too long ago in this province that you could have children in a car and actually light a cigarette. It's this government that made the changes to stop that.

We're just adding to our Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy here in the province of Ontario, yet the opposition stands up and they're talking about anything but a smoke-free Ontario. It's time for them to recognize the hard work that's taking place on this side of the House and the great work that's taking place to ensure that young people and people of all ages in the province of Ontario have the opportunity to stay healthy and to be safe, and to continue to build an environment where we protect each other.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to point out to the minister that it is the job of the opposition to point out the weaknesses in legislation, not the attributes. It is our job to do that. If we didn't do it, we wouldn't be doing our job.

But I do want to pay reference to the member from Ottawa South. He spoke this morning, wishing his mother a happy birthday. I want to chime in there—and it's got nothing to do with the bill, so I hope nobody interjects—that today would also be my mother's birthday. I will speak to the bill. My mother would be 92 today, if she was alive, but she died in 1974 from lung cancer. Ironically, because there are no guarantees, I'm certain that if maybe my mother smoked, she might have died younger than 50. But she died at the age of 50 from lung cancer, never having smoked in her life. She was just one of those people who was very unlucky. She probably worked herself to death, raising 14 kids, one of them being me, which was probably not the easiest thing to do.

I did want to reference that today, April 6, 2016, would be my mother's birthday. I will speak to the smoking aspect of it because, yes, there was smoking in our house and there was smoking in our place of business, the hardware store, which my mother laboured at for many years. When my dad was here in the Legislature, she was there at the hardware store all the time. In those days, the funny thing was, you'd be serving a customer and the customer and the person serving them—one of our people on the floor—would both have cigarettes in their hands or in their mouths and would be talking. The place was full of smoke all the time. Could that have had

an impact on my mother's health? It's certainly likely that it did.

Any time we do things to make people healthy, I'm going to be in favour of it, but I will also take the opportunity to point out the weaknesses, the reasons or the problems behind the government's legislation. Thank you for this opportunity this morning. Happy birthday, Mom.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): One of the three speakers has two minutes. The government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the member from Hamilton Mountain, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their remarks. Not all of them were on point, as the Speaker noted. Nonetheless, I want to acknowledge the very important role the opposition has to play to make government accountable and point out where things can be improved. Of course, we're debating a particular bill, not every single issue under the sun. There are moments to do that as well.

0940

But in terms of this bill, I'm hearing a general consensus—or, by not hearing talk about this bill, that there is a general consensus—that this bill is in the right direction, that this bill is addressing the right issue. That was very clear to me from what I heard from other members: We have a real issue at hand. Albeit, this is a very small bill and makes changes to three words, but they're three important words that are being changed.

It is expanding the scope of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ensure that the Smoke-Free Ontario Act does not just apply to tobacco products. It is making sure that the principles that are enshrined in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which are now universally accepted, which are now universally hailed in this province, which people actually are benefitting from and are getting healthier as a result of—what this bill is saying is, "Let's take that scope and now expand the same principle to other products and substances."

What do we mean by other products and substances? Right now, we mean the use of marijuana, be it medical marijuana, which is legally allowed by the federal government, or the potential use of recreational marijuana, which is being considered by the federal government as well. I think this is a logical step. This is the right step, and it's going to result in an even healthier Ontario, which is our mandate to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Before I debate Bill 178 and give evidence why I will not be supporting Bill 178, I should take this moment to say that it is Tartan Day in Ontario, and we need more tartans in our Legislative Assembly from the looks of things today. I do see my colleague from the great riding—with Scottish heritage—of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. He's got a bit of a tartan tie on there, I would think. Anyway, it's a pleasure to be

here on Tartan Day and wearing both suspenders and tie in tartan today.

Back to the bill: Bill 178 can't be discussed singularly; it must be talked about in conjunction with Bill 45. When we look at these two pieces of legislation, what I see is an attack on compassion. I see an attack on caring. I see an attack on people's health and I see an attack on reducing harm. That's what I see with these two bills, and I want to explain why.

Bill 178 now captures medicinal marijuana, or cannabis, under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Bill 45 also captures these things—vaporizers. These are now considered tobacco products under this Liberal government. What they basically have done is they've said, "We are legislating that apple trees are now orange trees in Ontario." The member from Eglinton—Lawrence, I believe, brought in a bill the other day to recognize a fruit as Ontario's vegetable. Evidence and reason are out the door with this Liberal government.

Let's put this in perspective. There are approximately 25,000 people taking medicinal marijuana in this province to alleviate the pain and suffering that they're experiencing due to illness or disease; they're alleviating their pain and suffering. Medicinal marijuana is recognized and prescribed for that function. It's everything from PTSD to epilepsy to people on chemotherapy. These people are enjoying a somewhat better life, less pain, because of medicinal marijuana. This bill now ostracizes and unduly restricts where they can take their prescription medicine, but it also prevents them from using less harmful methods, such as a vaporizer, to take that prescription. So we're taking away the harm-reduction component with Bill 45, and then we're also taking the cannabis itself and saying, "If you want to take your prescription, you must do it in the same place where people are smoking."

Just picture this. If you're in public housing, if you're in a condo building, a college dorm, if you're visiting in a hotel and you take prescription cannabis, you will not be allowed to do that. You can't do that in public housing; you can't do that in condos; you can't do it in a hotel or a motel with this bill. You certainly can't go to a cannabis or vape lounge, because they won't exist under this bill. So where do you go?

Here in Toronto, right at the moment, we have 13 vape lounges where people are taking their medicinal marijuana, often in devices something like this, in a less harmful fashion. Those vape lounges will now be extinct. They will not be allowed to operate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just a friendly reminder to the member: You can't use a prop. I let you go a couple of times already. Just keep it on the desk, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you for those words, Speaker. I'm not using it as a prop; I'm trying to use it as an instructional. Does that look like marijuana? Does that look like a cigarette? It's an electronic device. It's not a prop, but I will not touch it and I will not hold it up. But

it is important for members to understand what this legislation does.

So 25,000 medicinal marijuana users will now have to go outside and congregate with smokers to ingest their prescription.

I also want to say this: I've heard of a whole bunch of anecdotal stories and suggestions that people are smoking their medicinal marijuana on public transit, in taxis, in airplanes and in bars. I've not seen any evidence. I have never seen anybody smoking medicinal marijuana in any of those places—never. If somebody has, please jump in on the debate in the questions and comments and explain how often that has happened or where. I know of one case—one case only—where somebody wanted to use their medicinal marijuana and smoke it in a public restaurant. That was at Gator Ted's. There was a human rights action over that.

People are respectful. People are not out smoking medicinal marijuana in our public schools, or in our bars or restaurants. I take trains. I take planes. I go to restaurants. I have never seen that happen. So what problem are we actually solving with Bill 178? What problem? There's one example, Gator Ted's.

But in the process, we're doing so much harm. We're preventing people who are suffering from using in less harmful ways. We are putting them as outcasts.

I think there are probably a number of people in this House, a number of people in this province, who believe that medicinal marijuana is just some pretext to use it recreationally. I can tell you—and I'm sure there are many people in this House who know people who are suffering debilitating diseases and injuries—they are gaining some sense of a quality of life, being able to take prescription marijuana.

0950

I think this is important to emphasize: People are more than their illness and people are more than their disease. They're not just a cancer victim. They're not just a person who suffers from epilepsy. Whatever the affliction is, they still remain a person, a person who requires social interactions, who requires that interchange between people.

Bill 178 and Bill 45 ostracize those people. They make pariahs of those people. It's like we're going back to the 1800s or the 1700s with lepers, with Bill 178 and Bill 45: If you need to have a prescription, we're going to put you over in that corner where society can't see you and doesn't want to see you. That's not caring. It's not compassion. Obviously, under this bill, these vape lounges, these cannabis lounges, places where people can socialize and take their prescription, are outlawed. They're extinct.

I'll say to you, Speaker, that instead of promoting harm reduction, this Liberal government is promoting harm with Bill 178—promoting harm, not harm reduction. Instead of promoting health and healthy living, they're promoting poor health. They're promoting pain. They're promoting suffering for these people.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see the Minister of Tourism thinks that it's funny that people are suffering; it's funny that people are suffering and that they will not be able to find a warm place in January to take their medication. There's nothing funny about this, nothing funny at all, in my view, for those people who are suffering.

Bear this in mind as well: That vaporizer that I showed earlier is now deemed a tobacco product as well, and the product inside of it, whether it be a marijuana extract, a caffeine extract or a vanilla extract, it's all deemed to be tobacco. An apple tree is now an orange tree. A fruit is now a vegetable in Ontario with this Liberal government.

Why would we prevent somebody from taking their prescription in a less harmful fashion? It ought to be obvious to the members on the Liberal side that the Supreme Court ruling just last year that stated our laws must accommodate and allow people to take their prescription drugs in the least harmful or in a less harmful fashion—our laws have to allow that. This law prevents it. It's absolutely contrary to a Supreme Court ruling.

I have no doubt that we will see Bill 178 and Bill 45 in front of the courts very soon. They will be challenged; they will be struck down. They'll be struck down because this Liberal government is not cognizant or compassionate about people. They're also not cognizant of the very laws that they make and the rulings that our courts bring out.

Here's an interesting research paper that was done. It was republished today in Reason magazine. The title is Lying About ... E-cigarettes Is Like Blocking Access to Clean Heroin Needles.

It goes on to say that this is "a blistering indictment of lying in the name of 'public health.'" Look at that: "lying in the name of 'public health.'"

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see that the Treasury Board thinks this is all funny as well, and that it's a laughing matter when we're talking about people's health and the government's undue restriction on allowing people to ease their suffering. It's unfortunate that the Deputy Premier thinks this is a laughing matter.

It goes on: "In a blistering indictment of lying in the name of 'public health,' two prominent tobacco researchers slam medical organizations and government agencies for suppressing information about the huge difference in risk between electronic cigarettes...."

The two authors wrote in the International Journal of Drug Policy. Lynn Kozlowski is a public health professor at the State University of New York in Buffalo, and David Sweanor is an adjunct law professor at the University of Ottawa. They both have come out and said that government is lying about public health.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down. The member will withdraw what he just said. Well?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Anyway, it's a research paper. Let me just read a little bit more about this, and I'll try to make sure that I include only parliamentary language out of this synopsis.

"Ignorance about the relative hazards of e-cigarettes, which are ... something like 95% safer than" conventional smoking, "is also widespread, thanks largely to pronouncements from government agencies and anti-smoking groups that are unhelpful at best and downright false at worst."

I would encourage members on the Liberal side, and also members on this side, to actually take a look and read and research this on their own. Don't just accept the talking points from their party. Do some independent research, and we'll see.

How do they reconcile this fact that medicinal marijuana is a recognized prescription medicine, but at the same time, they're going to unduly limit, restrict and prevent people from taking it? As I said at the beginning, where is this great outcry? Where is this great body of evidence that people are smoking medicinal marijuana on the planes and the trains and the automobiles? I haven't seen it. I've never seen anything in the papers about somebody offended because somebody was smoking medicinal marijuana on a plane or on a train or on a bus. I haven't seen those stories.

I have seen one story—one story: Gator Ted. It was funny; it was interesting. In that Human Rights Tribunal case, the Human Rights Tribunal said they had to allow this gentleman, Gator Ted, to have access to his medicinal marijuana, even if it contravened provincial law.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I find it interesting that the Liberal ministers find humour and find this all funny when we're debating Bill 178, when we're debating a significant bill. It's a short bill, but it has powerful consequences when it's combined with Bill 45. If Bill 45 didn't exist, you might go for it, but reducing and eliminating harm reduction through Bill 45 with Bill 178 is an absolutely compounding and conflicting set of laws that will be challenged.

1000

I had a group of people in to see me—the Cannabis Friendly Business Association, the vape association, the Canadian Vaper, the Tobacco Harm Reduction Association of Canada—thousands and thousands of people, and I know that this Liberal government is receiving thousands and thousands of complaints on their actions. They're going to drag taxpayers' money through the courts, and they're going to lose. They would be wise to sit back and take a look at people and act in a caring and compassionate manner.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to listen to the comments from our colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. He raised some important points—some maybe a little bit off the mark. Nevertheless, I think the overall theme of his discourse was that the government was inept and, frankly, incompetent in the development of this bill initially, when it was Bill 45, that incarnation of the bill. There's been no contrition. What we're hearing is laughter from the government

side. They're laughing at the fact that they're wasting time in here, laughing all the way, knowing full well that their incompetence has led to a waste of time in this Legislature that should be used to talk about substantive issues that support our communities—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I guess I don't have to tell you, do I? No yelling across the floor. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: When they start yelling like that, you know you've hit a nerve, frankly.

We've seen this time and time again. What could they have done to avoid this? Maybe some discussion, some consultation with those stakeholders who clearly knew you were making a mistake. They cut off debate. They called closure on the bill, didn't listen to the public because, in their world, in their bubble, Liberals know best. They're going to do it with campaign finance reform. They're going to mess it up again, undoubtedly. We know that. They're too busy with their fundraisers. They're busy selling off public assets. They can't even get the basic fundamentals of this bill right. There are four words that they're changing here: "prescribed products and substances."

What a complete failure that we're in this House right now, having to watch them, without any contrition, laugh and laugh as we try to fight for real substantive issues in this House. It's a sad day, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The legislation that's before us, I believe, with a few exceptions, from what I've heard in the debate taking place, is going to be supported by all three of the political parties in the Legislature, if not by all members. I think that's because there's a recognition that this legislation is needed.

First of all, I think people were pleased that, overall, the legislation dealt with the traditional smoking that we saw happening in the province, and there's been a significant change taking place over the years. Those of us who are sports fans, for instance, will recall that we would go into an arena and the announcement would be made, "No smoking in the arena proper. Smoking in corridors and lobbies only." If you went out there, you didn't have to smoke, you simply had to breathe, and you'd be the same as a person who would be smoking.

There have been many changes taking place. Some of the arenas, when they banned smoking, which I thought may never happen, in places like the old Maple Leaf Gardens, for instance, now don't even allow, in many cases, people to go outside to smoke between periods. We recognize as well that when we used to go into bars or restaurants or even on airplanes, smoking was allowed, and now it is not. This transformation is taking place.

The bill addresses some circumstances that may not have been contemplated. I think there's a time to spend a lot of time on some legislation before the House. I'm a

person who believes that we should rate the various bills with the opposition and say, "We'll spend a lot of time on this bill, and not so much time on another."

I think this bill lends itself, with the support of the three parties, to passage in the House so that we can deal with other matters which are of great significance—not suggesting this isn't—and I hope we will be able to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington this morning. The one thing I'll say about my friend from LFLA: He's never afraid to stand in this House or anywhere else and be the voice for people who feel they don't have a voice. In our democratic system, I think that's extremely important. Sometimes it's not easy to paddle against the current. I'll say to my friend Mr. Hillier that he has never been shy about paddling against the current, even if sometimes that's a rapid he's trying to go against the flow on.

Having said that, he raises a significant, important issue. No matter what piece of legislation we bring forth as government or in opposition, whatever piece of legislation comes before this House, there's always an element about that piece of legislation that will be viewed or can be shown in a very empirical way to be restrictive for one group or another group of people.

I happen to be one of the people who generally take the position that the benefit of the greater number—the benefit of all, as we say—trumps the rights of the few. Having said that, I think it's important in our system that there are always people who are willing to take the other view and say that the rights of the few cannot be trumped simply because a piece of legislation is designed to be for the good of all. That is something that my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has never been shy about doing, and I take my hat off to him and congratulate him for taking sometimes an unpopular stance on a challenging issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I move to the next question, I'd like to remind members that when they come into this House and leave it, they're supposed to acknowledge the Chair. There's a particular couple who haven't been doing it all day.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise to address the comments made by our colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I always have to have a note in front of me. I have to tell the member from that riding that there are a lot of people who find it very difficult to get all the way through that title; no question about it.

There are two elements here, Speaker. One is that when it was first announced by the parliamentary assistant that people would be able to smoke medical marijuana in many places where they wouldn't be able to smoke tobacco, that very day I got blasted by cab drivers, restaurant owners and others who said, "I've got nothing

against people smoking marijuana. It's going to be legalized. It's probably a good thing." But they didn't want to smoke the second-hand smoke. It's as simple as that.

So I think it makes sense that we look for the way that we can accommodate and assist people who need that medication for their health, for pain control or for seizure control, but it also has to be very clear that people who don't want to be smoking things on a second-hand basis should not be put in a situation where they are. It's not a good thing. There is going to have to be regulation and control on this.

The second thing I want to say, though, is that my colleague from Nickel Belt spoke very well yesterday for an hour and others have had an opportunity to address a similar line of argument today. We went through this with Bill 45, which left out four critical words in that bill, and we're back here again. Really? She also made the point that shisha, the smoking of water pipes, is not regulated. Frankly, it's something that is now being addressed here in Toronto. I think it will be addressed in other municipalities.

We're—sorry, not we; the government, the Liberals, are once again doing exactly what they've done within the last 12 months: ignoring a huge issue, thinking that they have figured it all out and it's going to be dealt with. It ain't gonna be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the members from Essex, Danforth, the minister without portfolio and my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for their comments. They were thoughtful and it was enjoyable to hear their comments.

I do want to say one thing about Bill 178 and Bill 45. I agree with the member for Danforth. There have to be greater restrictions than what are in place at the present time. But this government has gone to the complete extreme. Now, it is closing down those few social locations for people to take that medicinal marijuana—the vape shops, the cannabis lounges. Those fall under this as well.

I'll grant you the taxis; I'll grant you the buses and all those things. But there needs to be accommodation, and this bill does not provide accommodation. It takes all accommodation away.

Contrary to the minister without portfolio and his comments—it appears that he believes that this bill is going to fix the problems of the 1970s, as he speaks about Maple Leaf Gardens and the smoke-filled corridors of Maple Leaf Gardens. Well, we know that Maple Leaf Gardens doesn't even exist anymore—

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a Loblaws.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a Loblaws—but we also know that none of our arenas, none of our sporting venues, allow for smoking in them anyway. We got rid of those things.

Bill 178 can't be used to address the problems of the 1970s. It needs to be used to address the circumstances

and the conditions that we face today. Medicinal marijuana was also not available in the 1970s, but it is available today. We need to accommodate people and help them alleviate their pain and suffering.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed till 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my profound pleasure to introduce today a series of guests who have come to support Rowan's Law. Brian Stemmler is a retired Canadian skier who went to four Olympics for our country, and we're very pleased that he's here. We also have John Goodchild. We have Rowan Stringer's parents, Kathleen and Gord Stringer, and then someone who needs no introduction in this room, probably one of Canada's greatest hockey legends of all time, Eric Lindros. I'd like to welcome them to the assembly.

I have a little bit more to add, because at 11:30 today in the side room of the legislative dining room, I'm inviting all MPPs to come and meet with Brian Stemmler as well as Eric Lindros, to talk about concussions, have a little bit of light lunch and get some autographs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not to take anything away from this wonderful day that you've organized, but coming from Brantford, I thought, "Wayne Gretzky's not a bad player too."

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But he's not here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just thought I'd put that in.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my great pleasure to welcome Sharon Maloney, CEO of Career Colleges Ontario, and John Nelson, board chair; Luisa Tanzi, treasurer; and Tim Heggie, executive committee member of Career Colleges Ontario.

Career colleges are a great part of post-secondary education in our province of Ontario. Please join me in welcoming them.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. Everybody here knows the French words "déjà vu," so it's a bit of déjà vu. I get the chance again today to souhaiter la bienvenue à M^{lle} Amanda Simard. Elle est conseillère de la municipalité de Russell dans la circonscription de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. Elle est ici dans la galerie des membres. Bienvenue.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the public gallery today are students from my alma mater in Peterborough, Trent University. We have Ashley Fearnall, Belicia Davila, Emmanuel Gasore, Justin Thompson, Chanté White, Erin Ford, Rebecca Hubble, Avori Purdy, Jessica Cole, Annette Pedlar, Theresa Benedict, Veronique Boucher and Kristina Dergacheva—very nice people from Trent University.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd just like to welcome Dane Grgas, who's here from my community. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to welcome, in our Legislature, on behalf of the Honourable Charles Sousa, MPP for Mississauga South, page captain Sohan Van de Mosselaer. His mother and grandmother are here: Dr. Mili Roy and Jaya Roy. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome Daniel Perry, a Loyalist College student, who is joining us here again today. Being from Belleville, I would also like to point out that Bobby Hull wasn't too bad either.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry I started it.

Further introductions?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome friends from Career Colleges Ontario who are with us today: George Hood, J.P. Roszell, Paul Kitchin, and Adriana.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm not sure if they're here yet, but I just wanted to welcome the students from Kipling Collegiate Institute, who are from my riding of Etobicoke Centre and visiting Queen's Park today.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It's again a great pleasure to welcome in our Legislature, on behalf of Mike Colle, MPP for Eglinton-Lawrence, page captain Maya Treitel. Her mother, Wendy; father, Natan; and sister, Gabriel are here, and also her grandparents Donnatée and David. They will be in our public gallery today, and I would like all of us to welcome them.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I've been informed that, apparently, today is your birthday. If that's the case, I want to wish you happy birthday from all the members. Happy birthday, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As you get older, it's really not all that important.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It beats the alternative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Being on the right side of the grass is a good thing.

Further introductions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome a couple of our friends from the OFA. Everybody knows Don. Welcome to Queen's Park once again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Despite the Premier's new-found interest in fundraising reform, it does not fix the years of shady quotas and tainted money—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My standing is a signal that I'm not going to tolerate outbursts.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Despite the Premier's new-found interest in fundraising reform, it does not fix the years of shady quotas and tainted money that has been raised by the Ontario Liberal Party. The people of Ontario need to know if government contracts and grants were traded for donations to the Ontario Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker, just as Quebec did, will the Premier immediately call a commission of inquiry? Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Before I go to the Premier, I'm just going to let you know that I reviewed yesterday, and we seem to be weaving in and out of questioning one's motive. I'm going to caution everyone to make sure that those questions are directed in a way that does not impugn motive. Maybe, if I have to, I'll review what that means. But I'm sure that all members would appreciate either side not to impugn a member, because that's not parliamentary. I'll just give you that as a caution, and I'll listen very carefully.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just take the Leader of the Opposition back some years, actually, to 2007. We've already undertaken a number of initiatives to make elections more accountable and transparent. In 2007, we introduced third-party advertising rules for the first time. We introduced real-time disclosure for political donations. Other provinces are catching up with that.

I announced last June that we were committed to making further changes, which we're doing. I announced yesterday that our government plans on introducing legislation on political donations this spring, including a transition away from union and corporate donations. I look forward to the meeting with the opposition leaders on Monday.

I'm leading by example. I've decided to immediately cancel private—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think you might want to hear this.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Sorry. Start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry, Premier, your time is up.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: The question was about a commission of inquiry, like Quebec's. This is not a laughing matter. We have seen corruption charges laid against a senior Liberal operative. This government has had four active OPP investigations against them. Now it appears to the public that the government has traded favours for fundraising.

Mr. Speaker, if this government has nothing to hide, will the Premier call a commission of inquiry to investigate the connection between donations and the govern-

ment grants and policy changes? It is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker, if the government has nothing to hide.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to complete what I was saying, I've made a decision to immediately cancel upcoming private fundraisers. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as I told the media this morning, I cancelled one tonight. The money will go back to the people who were going to attend. Ministers can do small, high-value fundraisers, but there will be stipulations on that, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the event will be publicly disclosed before it occurs, in a way that the media would consider legitimate.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, ministers will not be fundraising with stakeholders solely of their own ministry. We're making those changes immediately. I look forward to the conversation with the leaders of the opposition parties on Monday as we talk about what the transition should look like.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Leader of the Opposition that we have all been functioning under the same rules. We have all been following the same rules, and now we're going to change those rules.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: Political fundraising is legitimate; using government decisions to fundraise isn't. Cancelling the secret fundraisers is nothing more than a PR stunt. No other party does secret, private fundraisers. This is a PR stunt to divert attention from the perception that the Liberal Party has become synonymous with backroom money and backroom deals. The—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now, this is the point that I was making: We're getting dangerously close to imputing motive. However, given the circumstances, I'm going to try to ask all members to stay away from that. If it gets too close, I'm going to pass the question.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, the government can heckle and scream as loud as they want. They may have an aversion to facts, but the reality is the Liberal Party has become synonymous with backroom money and backroom deals.

The people of Ontario want the truth to come out, Mr. Speaker. Will the government do the right thing? Will the Premier, if she has nothing to hide, immediately call a commission of inquiry? It is the right thing to do; please do the right thing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: You're the dealmaker, Mr. Flip-flop.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not amused with what I just heard.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, our government believes that creating a fair and just society is the highest responsibility that we have here. Part of that means that the tax code is fair to Ontarians.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, come on. Talk about the pot calling the kettle black.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Interestingly, the very first private member's bill that the Leader of the Opposition tabled when he came to this House was one that gave a tax break to Ontario's wealthiest citizens by abolishing the tax act, Speaker. That's the kind of regressive tax policy that Republicans are famous for south of the border.

Speaker, because of the rules we introduced in 2007, we can actually look at the facts to see who donated to the leadership campaign and whether those donations may have had any influence in that very first act in this Legislature. So, just pointing out the facts, the member received—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Time's up.

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is once again to the Premier. The Hydro One sale is a perfect example of why we need a commission of inquiry. When the Liberals decided to sell Hydro One, the syndicate made \$29 million. The syndicate then held a reception to give the Liberal Party \$165,000 in donations.

Now, with the Liberals' latest announcement, they are selling 10.9 million more shares to that same syndicate, not the general public. Mr. Speaker, did the syndicate ask for this sweet deal at the last Liberal thank-you dinner?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I was saying, the Leader of the Opposition started his career at Queen's Park by advocating for a reduction and elimination of estate taxes. Speaker, the member received \$10,000 from Michael Vukets and Associates. They specialize in estate planning. He received \$25,000 from Canaccord Genuity Group, a wealth management company, and he received \$5,000 from SJC Investments, an international investment company.

Because of the changes we made in 2007, this information is available for all to see. But it is passing strange that the very first action that this leader took when he became a member of Legislature was to advocate for tax breaks for the very wealthiest Ontarians.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: I fail to understand, when we're talking about Liberal donations, why they're talking

about the Liberal increase to the death taxes. It's about muddying the waters and diverting the conversation.

I realize the Premier may not want to be on the record on this. It's easy to pass it off to another minister. It's a difficult conversation. It looks like a publicly owned asset is being sold for private Liberal donations. One-time Liberal gains equal years of financial pain when we lose the revenues from Hydro One. Why can't the syndicate buy their shares, like every other person or company in Ontario? It must have been because of those secret, private dinners.

Mr. Speaker, was the \$165,000 in donations to the Liberal Party in exchange for access to Hydro One shares? I would appreciate if the Premier would go on the record herself, rather than avoiding the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. Start the clock.

Deputy.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, what I would appreciate, and what I expect all Ontarians would appreciate, is if the Leader of the Opposition followed the lead of the Premier and cancelled the private fundraising dinners that he has planned.

I can remind you: April 19, you will be at the Albany Club with 10 people—only 10 guests—at \$10,000 a plate. I would hope that you would cancel that dinner. There's another one, on May 4, at Barberian's, a bargain-basement, \$5,000-a-plate dinner.

I do not understand how the Leader of the Opposition, with a straight face, can call on this government to make changes when he is not prepared to walk the walk himself. Speaker, I'm calling for the Leader of the Opposition to cancel those dinners.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: Unlike the government, we don't have private fundraisers. I put them out on social media immediately after.

Is their definition of private fundraisers—is this where they discuss the terms of the contracts?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. I could try to ask the members for their co-operation because I would possibly look at it as a birthday present.

I'm allowing this to—and—fro to happen because I think you need to have an opportunity to get it out, except to say that I really do need to hear what's going on.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm in the middle of a sentence—in the middle of a sentence.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: This government insists that they make policy free from the influence of Ontario Liberal Party donors, yet we see \$165,000 dinners secretly raising money for a party, from a group getting preferential access to the Hydro One shares. This arrangement

is the very thing the people of Ontario have come to despise about this government.

1050

Only a public inquiry will clear the air, but until the Premier agrees to that, the people deserve an answer to the following: How much money will the syndicate be pressured to donate after this next payday, and what will be given in exchange?

Once again, we would like the Premier on the record rather than passing the buck. Do the right thing: Answer the question on the public inquiry.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm not impressed.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the innuendo of the Leader of the Opposition is totally unfounded.

The broadening of the ownership of Hydro One has been complex and multi-stage. It has been essential for the government to have financial and legal advisers working on this project to ensure the interests of Ontarians are protected. By having the strongest professional expertise, we're ensuring Ontarians receive maximum value for their investment. The underwriters, the financial institutions that we used, which we've engaged for this offering, have been selected in an open and transparent manner to ensure that the process has been done in a very important and very crucial way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've engaged the former Auditor General of Canada, Denis Desautels, to develop a competitive process for selecting the lead financial—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. The Members' Integrity Act states: "A member of the assembly shall not accept a fee, gift or personal benefit that is connected directly or indirectly with the performance of his or her duties of office."

The Legislative Assembly Act states that a member shall not "knowingly accept or receive ... any fee, compensation or reward for or in respect of the drafting, advising upon, revising, promoting or opposing any bill."

The Liberals have created a system where ministers have to use their cabinet portfolios to raise money to meet fundraising quotas set by the Premier and the Liberal Party of Ontario. Has the Premier received legal assurances that the cabinet members' fundraising quota does not break the Members' Integrity Act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me once again just say that there has been a set of rules in place, and all

parties have followed those rules. We've followed them to the letter, Mr. Speaker.

But now we're going to change the rules. In fact, I've been clear that we were going to change those rules. I said last June that we were on track to change those rules. We're going to bring in legislation in the spring.

I look forward to the opportunity to speak with the leaders of the opposition parties to get their input. I think it's an important part of the process to hear from them, because quite frankly, up until a couple of days ago, I didn't hear anything from the leaders of the opposition. I started saying we needed to do this last June. I haven't heard anything from the leader of the third party or the Leader of the Opposition on the specifics of how they would move to make a change to the rules.

I look forward to the conversation on Monday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Ministers of Energy and Finance wrote the legislation to sell off Hydro One. Then they hired a group of bankers and lawyers to help them actually sell off Hydro One. Then the ministers hosted a fundraiser with those very same bankers and lawyers. The group of bankers and lawyers benefitted from the sale; the ministers benefitted from the fundraiser.

Can the Premier not understand how this is wrong and may very well violate the Members' Integrity Act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I'll just go over the changes that we are going to be bringing forward and the changes that we're making right now, because as I said, we're going to bring in legislation in the spring. That legislation will include a transition away from corporate and union donations. It's on that transition that I'm interested in hearing from the leaders of the opposition parties, because as I say, we have all been following the same rules. We are all going to be making a transition to a new set of rules.

I'm making some immediate changes now. I've made the decision to immediately cancel upcoming private fundraisers that I attend. In fact, as I told the media, I cancelled one tonight. The ministers will still be able to do small group fundraisers—high-value fundraisers—but there will be two stipulations. One is that it's publicly disclosed before the event, not after the event, as the Leader of the Opposition suggested, and the ministers will not be meeting solely with stakeholders—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm concerned that ministers assigned fundraising quotas by the Premier are using their portfolios to raise money for the Liberal Party. As such, I will be making—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, second time.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: —a complaint to the Integrity Commissioner.

Will the Premier agree to participate and ensure that her whole cabinet agrees to fully participate in any investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the Premier has already said, we've taken a number of steps to make elections more accountable and more transparent, and to make donations more transparent. In 2007, we introduced third-party advertising rules for the first time and introduced real-time disclosure for political donations.

The NDP has been critical of our attempts to actually ban corporate and union donations. That's kind of surprising because that's exactly the kind of reform that the NDP in Alberta made. They introduced an act to renew democracy in Alberta. She introduced legislation, and then it was sent to committee for public consultations.

Here in Ontario, we're actually consulting before we draft the legislation, before we introduce the legislation, because we think it's important that we get this right. That's why the Premier has invited party leaders to come and have the conversation before the legislation is introduced, unlike the NDP in Alberta.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The question is again to the Premier. This week, the Liberals agreed that they made a mistake by doubling the cost of medication for seniors in Ontario. Will they also admit they made a mistake by selling Hydro One and stop the sell-off of the next batch of shares?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are committed to investing in infrastructure in this province. It is not possible for Ontario to continue to lead and to take its strong and rightful position in the global economy if we don't invest in infrastructure.

Now, I know—and it is surprising—that the third party, the NDP, has not taken a strong position on investment in infrastructure. It's the kind of thing that one would have expected from the NDP, that they would support investment in public transit and investment in roads in the north and investment in communities so that they could upgrade their infrastructure. That's not the position that the NDP has taken, which is surprising, but it is our position. We need to make those investments. The broadening of the ownership of Hydro One—one asset—in order to invest in new assets is exactly what's needed in this province at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: No one believes that selling off Hydro One is going to help our infrastructure. Everyone knows that it's going to put us in a worse position. The Financial Accountability Officer has stated that very clearly. No one buys that story.

The Liberals made a decision to hurt over a million seniors in Ontario. They backed away from that decision. Selling Hydro One won't just hurt seniors, it will hurt people across the province.

Of course, selling off Hydro One does help the donors who attended the fundraiser with the Ministers of Energy and Finance. We understand why you're doing it, but why is the Premier backing off from a decision that hurt over a million seniors, but doubling down on a decision to sell Hydro One, which will not only hurt the seniors,

but will hurt the rest of the 14 million people who live in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I travel this province and talk to community leaders, one of the very top priorities that community leaders have is investment in infrastructure. It doesn't matter whether I'm in a small northern community or a large, growing urban community in southern Ontario, the reality is that municipalities have not been able to make the investments that they need—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, second time.

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: They need the provincial support to invest in infrastructure that, quite frankly, was neglected for decades. So we're making those investments. It is a fundamental part of our economic plan.

I would say to the third party that we are leading Canada in terms of economic growth this year. We have been, for two years running, the leader in North America in foreign direct investment. The investments we're making are bearing fruit, and that's good for jobs today and it's good for the economy going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Selling 15% of Hydro One was bad. Selling 30% is worse. It's going to end up costing us billions of dollars, which will mean cuts to infrastructure and public services—not building them up—not just today, but for future generations. Eight in 10 Ontarians are against this sell-off.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Beaches—East York, second time.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's bad for managing our electricity system. It will hurt the fight against climate change.

I know that the Premier is having a rough week, but will she make it better for all of us, and herself, and agree not to sell off any more of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's very surprising to hear the NDP say that investment in public transit will hurt greenhouse gas emission reduction. It is absolutely, absolutely flawed logic.

The reality is that those are the kinds of investments that we absolutely have to make. We have to promote the investment in infrastructure that will allow electric vehicles to flourish in this province. We have to invest in more public transit so that, as part of our climate change reduction strategy, we actually see those reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Quite the contrary to what the NDP is saying, the fact that we are making those investments is part of our economic plan that is going to allow us to thrive in a clean, greener economy, something they should be supporting.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and happy birthday.

My question this morning is for the President of the Treasury Board. Last week, we learned that a treasury board president was engaged in questionable practices regarding potential influence peddling—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: That was in Quebec, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh. Well, you mention Quebec if it's there.

Interjections.

Mr. Todd Smith: Sam Hamad—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It doesn't matter. I asked you to withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Now you can correct yourself, if you wish.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much. That was in Quebec, and Sam Hamad was forced to resign.

Last week, we learned that \$165,000 changed hands between the Minister of Finance and the syndicate that underwrote the Hydro One sell-off. Yesterday, we learned that those same banks are getting a private opportunity to buy an additional \$10 million in Hydro One shares—10 million Hydro One shares. Let me correct my record again.

Speaker, how does the minister explain this \$165,000 kickback from the big banks?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That kind of question is just irresponsible. The fact of the matter is, this entire process is being done by third parties. There is no involvement whatsoever by the government in this process.

In fact, the process is completely being reviewed by the former Auditor General of Canada, Denis Desautels—I don't know if I'm saying his name right, Madame Meilleur.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Close enough.

Hon. Brad Duguid: He has been involved in this from day one.

It has been developed as a competitive process, and they've selected lead financial firms to carry it out. The member knows this. It's totally arm's-length to government. We have no input into that process whatsoever.

So stop the allegations that are totally unfounded, and be responsible in your questions about a very important matter of public policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The facts are the facts, and the facts are out there on the table, in this case. It's nice to know

that the big banks feel that they're getting their money's worth from this government. If this type of thing occurred with a contractor, he'd be up on fraud charges. If a lawyer did it, he'd go to jail. When Sam Hamad did it in Quebec, he had to step down as the Treasury Board president. He did the right thing in Quebec.

Can the Treasury Board president explain why it's more acceptable in Ontario than Quebec for a minister to be involved in a scheme like this one certainly appears to be?

Hon. Brad Duguid: If that is not borderline slanderous, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what is. You have absolutely no grounds to make those kind of allegations. You're making it up as you go along—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the member's wild allegations are a smear to the former Auditor General of Canada, Denis Desautels, who was overseeing this process. It would indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is completely being done in a third-party fashion. The government and our members have no involvement in this whatsoever.

It's totally irresponsible for you to make those kind of allegations. I'm really shocked because I know this member. He does have integrity, Mr. Speaker. For him to make those kinds of allegations, I have to suggest that he's really on the borderline of slander, and his integrity, I think, can be questioned by those types of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has acknowledged her front bench have fundraising quotas that they have to meet. The bigger the cabinet portfolio, the bigger the quota. A suspicious person might wonder—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is warned.

Finish, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The bigger the cabinet portfolio, the bigger the quota. A suspicious person might wonder how much of a cabinet assignment is based on merit and how much is based on a talent for fundraising.

Does the Premier take fundraising ability into consideration when she's assigning high-profile positions on that front bench?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I have said, and that is that we have all operated under a set of rules.

I am incredibly proud of my whole team. Every member on these benches is part of a team. We all do our bit. They are talented, intelligent people, and I am lucky to have them as my colleagues. I respect every one of them. They all do their bit, as I expect members on the other benches do.

Part of our job is to raise funds so that our political parties can operate. We've done that with integrity. We've followed the same rules, and now those rules are going to change, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: There is a huge difference between my \$20 spaghetti dinner at the Legion that's open to everyone and the Hydro One—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Finish, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —and the Hydro One privatization donation party that the Liberal government hosts. There's a big difference.

Last week, the Premier was asked about ministerial fundraising quotas and she said, "You'll have to talk to the party." But, of course, the Premier isn't just the Premier. She's also the leader of the Liberal Party.

Was the Premier involved in setting her cabinet ministers' fundraising quotas?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, it seems the member of the third party has forgotten that her party was part of an ethics probe into a \$10,000 exclusive fundraiser they held in December. I'm not sure what was on the menu, but I bet it wasn't spaghetti.

1110

"Despite banning corporate donations in Alberta, Horwath asked Premier Notley to attend her fundraiser, marketed at corporations. Many of the corporations had business interests in Alberta." That's from the Alberta Ethics Commissioner's report in March. "The event even marketed that Premier Notley would attend and resulted in the highest-reported ticket price for an NDP fundraiser ever. The president of the Ontario NDP, Karla Webber-Gallagher, who was interviewed in the probe, confirmed that Bruce Logan, Horwath's senior adviser, made personal calls to prospective donors before putting anything in emails."

INVASIVE SPECIES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Through you, Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Invasive species pose a serious threat to our natural resources, our biodiversity and the economy of Ontario, significantly impacting delicate ecosystems and costing tens of millions of dollars every year. This is well known by Canada's top experts, including especially biology prof Shelley Arnott at Queen's University.

Managing the impacts of species like zebra mussels in Ontario is estimated to be about \$75 million to \$91 million per year. The city of Toronto estimates that it has spent at least \$37 million over the last five years to cut and replace city-owned trees killed by the emerald ash borer.

Species like these and many others have the potential to do long-term damage to the economy of Ontario. Minister, can you please tell us what steps the province is taking to manage invasive species?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. She's raised the example of zebra mussels. It's a great example of how if we're not proactive when it comes to the issue of invasive species, there's significant ecological and economic devastation that can come to the province of Ontario.

We know in all likelihood that zebra mussels were introduced through ballast water in international tankers, but we also know there's an opportunity for success because there has not been another waterborne invasive introduced to Ontario waters in quite some time—in fact, in a number of years. That's primarily due to the changes in the rules that have been made by the federal government when it comes to the discharge of ballast water.

Being proactive is very important. In that regard, we take great pride in being the first and only jurisdiction with stand-alone legislation in Canada. That legislation has received royal assent. We've also invested in an invasive species centre in Sault Ste. Marie, which I had the opportunity to visit some time ago, that's doing great work on this file. More will be done.

I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

Preventing invasive species from arriving and becoming established is critical in our fight against the growing threat that invasive species represent to Ontario. Species that are at risk of being introduced into our province, such as the Asian carp, have the potential to do long-lasting damage to our economic and environmental systems, such as impacting our \$2.2-billion recreational fishing industry right here in Ontario.

Once established, it becomes more difficult to eradicate invasive species. Therefore, a rapid and coordinated response, a response that can reach across borders to new invasive species, is required.

Minister, can you tell us how the Invasive Species Act and other initiatives from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry allow the province, its partners and the public to address emerging invasive species?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. She raises the example of the Asian carp. That is an invasive species that, if it reaches into Ontario waters, will be able to and will impact with untold devastation on our recreational fishing.

In that regard, I travelled to Chicago in early January. We had an opportunity to visit basically where the beachhead is being established to try to prevent the introduction of Asian carp into Ontario waters. We had opportunities to meet with the Army Corps of Engineers, which is doing the work and leading the charge on this, share with them best practices from Ontario's side and engage in whatever we can do to support the work that they're doing there.

We've already been working very closely with the Canada Border Services Agency in this regard, to try and do what we can at the border, but it's important for everybody to know that we're doing what we can. We

have visited in Chicago to see what's going on there. We need to do all that we can. Our legislation will enable us, through powers contained and regulations that are coming, to do everything we can to prevent the introduction of Asian carp into Ontario waters as best we're able.

CONCUSSIONS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Sport. Today, we have with us Canadian hockey legend Eric Lindros and four-time alpine skiing Olympian Brian Stemmler, who have joined us at Queen's Park to call for the passing of Rowan's Law so that Ontario will become the first jurisdiction in all of Canada to pass concussion legislation.

Severe brain injuries can cause depression and mental health issues. As we saw with Rowan's passing, they can even cause death. We cannot afford a delay in the passage of Rowan's Law because we need consistent protocols for treatment and, in the case of sports, the return to play. Depending on how you answer this, Minister, we may have a chance at getting Eric Lindros to play in the Legiskaters game on April 19.

Can the minister outline the steps he's prepared to take in order for Rowan's Law to become a reality?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Well, Mr. Speaker, if he's playing, I don't want to be in the net.

This is a very serious issue. I want to take a moment to thank the member opposite, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Kitchener-Waterloo for their leadership on this file because it's such an important issue. Safety in sport, without question, is something that our government takes very seriously.

I'd like to take a moment also, Mr. Speaker, to thank Rowan's parents, who are here, and, of course, Mr. Lindros and his wife, who are here, and the advocates who are supporting this initiative.

Rowan's Law is the first step towards increasing awareness, prevention, identification and management of concussion in sport. Like the member opposite said, this would be the first initiative in the entire country, the first strategy put in place to take on this very serious issue. I know the House leader would like to speak on this issue in the follow-up in regard to the process moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the support that the minister has given me and the Stringer family throughout this process. I'm sure he can agree, with the recent events in the NHL last week and the movie Concussion exposing the NFL this past winter, that it's now clear that Ontario can and must take a leadership role in concussion awareness, research and treatment. Rowan's Law will be the coordinating voice that will bring together experts to implement a series of coroner's inquest recommendations from Rowan Stringer's death from second impacts that are sustained by multiple concussions.

Would the minister consider hosting a round table with possible committee appointees this month in advance of the committee bill passage?

Hon. Michael Coteau: To the House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I want to thank all the members who have been very actively working on this very important issue. I want to especially acknowledge Rowan's parents, who are here as well.

As we know—and I think the member who asked the question knows very well—there is a process by which the House leaders work in a very collaborative fashion when they discuss all matters that are brought before this House, including private members' bills. This is an issue that we've had the opportunity to speak about, and I'm sure there's going to be more opportunities when we'll be speaking about this bill and other important private members' bills before this House.

I very much look forward to having those constructive conversations so that we can find a way of passing this groundbreaking legislation. Of course, I look forward to that opportunity of speaking with my respective House leaders on this issue and other issues when it comes to making sure that all those relevant matters come to this House.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Last December, one of the banks that ran the initial sell-off of Hydro One promoted a \$7,500-per-person fundraiser, offering private face time with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy. One of the emails promoting the event specifically mentioned the Hydro One sale. The fundraiser attracted a select group of Bay Street players who stood to profit from the Hydro One sale, raising \$165,000 for the Liberal Party. Later today, the Minister of Energy and Minister of Finance will announce the further sell-off of Hydro One. Should the public see the fundraiser as the quid and today's Hydro One sell-off as the quo?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

1120

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, with that line of questioning, I would echo words that you often say: We're getting into a race to the bottom, with those kinds of unfounded suggestions and allegations, which are completely contrary—and the member knows this—to the way that this entire transaction is taking place.

This government has taken a very thoughtful and strategic approach to ensure the best value for the benefits of Ontarians. That's why the allocation of these offerings is in the hands of professionals. That's why it's third-party. That's why our ministers and our government do not have anything to do with the way this transaction rolls out. I know the member knows that. I'm a little surprised he would try to allege something that simply is not true. I don't think it's a fair thing to say in this Legislature. I don't think it's a fair allegation.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've explained that the process is completely unfettered of any kind of political involvement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This whole sell-off is a race to the bottom, the whole damned thing.

Only the Liberal Party would try to distract from what has been seen as a pay-to-play fundraising scandal by showing everyone exactly why it is a scandal. Last December, Hydro One profiteers gave the Liberal Party \$165,000. Today, those same profiteers stand to make millions from the sale of Hydro One.

Nobody believes this is in the public interest. The Financial Accountability Officer has said this is not in the public interest.

Will the Premier finally put the interests of Ontarians ahead of her Bay Street friends, her donors, and stop the sale of Hydro One?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The interests of Ontarians rest firmly in our ability to invest in the infrastructure across this province. That means building public transit. That means building roads and bridges—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That means investing in core infrastructure from one part of the province to the other.

The key here is we're willing to make the decisions we need to make, to make those investments. The folks on the other side of this Legislature do not have the courage to make those investments. They talk the talk, but they don't support us when we build this province up, when we build public transit, when we build roads and bridges, when we build core infrastructure like water/waste-water.

We're proud of the investments we're making: \$160 billion over the next 12 years, the biggest investment in infrastructure in the history of Canada. You can't make those investments if you don't have the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Start the clock.

New question.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hold on. Try it again.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. I know that in my riding of Davenport, I have a large group of seniors who are actively involved in the community, and it's important for me to know that they remain healthy and active.

As a matter of fact, when the minister recently spoke about his constituent Maria, it reminded me of my constituent Gloria, who too is a very engaged and active senior in my own riding of Davenport. Just like Maria, Gloria too wants to know what our government is doing to improve the lives of seniors.

Minister, as you know, Ontario's seniors have worked hard to make our province great, and we owe it to them to continue providing the services they rely on, especially at a time in their lives when they need it most.

Recently, during the 2016 budget deliberations, I heard from a number of seniors, including Gloria, with concerns about the costs of prescription drugs and copayments. I understand this government has been listening during the consultation process of the 2016 budget deliberations.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister inform the House of what is being done—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Let me thank the remarkable member from Davenport for a good question.

Speaker, when someone reaches the age of 65 years old, he or she is automatically eligible to receive prescription drugs covered through the Ontario Drug Benefit Program. Seniors would pay a yearly deductible or copayment of \$100, and then some \$6.11 for dispensing fees.

The 2016 budget, Speaker, addresses this very big issue in a very positive way. Low-income seniors no longer will be required to pay the \$100 copayment or deductible, or the dispensing fee of \$6.11 will drop to \$2. What this means is that 170,000 low-income seniors will be saving \$130 a year. This goes a long way in helping our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to thank the minister for his response. I know that Gloria and the seniors in my riding of Davenport will be pleased to hear of the changes that are being made, and I'm pleased to learn that lower-income seniors can apply for help with these costs through the Seniors Co-Payment Program. I know that in my riding of Davenport, this will be welcomed by many who fall into this category.

It is helpful to know that if the 2016 budget is passed, low-income seniors that fall under the Seniors Co-Payment Program will pay no yearly deductible, and the copayment drops up to \$2 for each filled prescription. That is great news and I know many will be happy to learn of these changes.

It is important to know that our seniors are being taken care of. I applaud the minister for the great work he has done as the minister responsible for seniors' affairs and his efforts to make sure these changes were made.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please inform the House about what he is hearing from seniors and what recent measures this government is doing to further assist seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question again. Let me say that I speak regularly to seniors, and especially in the last week I have been enjoying speaking to a lot of seniors. But when I finish speaking to my seniors in the riding of York West, telling them of the positive measures that would improve their lives with the content of the budget, then they end up putting on a nice big smile.

I tell them that they will be saving \$170 for the shingles vaccine. I keep telling them that they save \$70 for the elimination of their hydro debt retirement charges. I tell them that they save \$30 from the emissions test, and 135,000 seniors will be paying 50% less when they go to the hospital parking lot. This helps our seniors in a big way.

Also, there's an infusion of \$75 million over three years in community-based residential hospice and palliative care. On this side of the House we always try to improve the quality of life for our seniors.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Speaker, hard-working volunteer groups are in shock after the Ontario Trillium Foundation suddenly suspended its capital grant program. This funding is vital to Legions, community centres and other facilities as it literally keeps the roof over their heads. Now this government has funnelled every cent of Trillium's \$25-million capital program into the Ontario 150 program. That's right: A minister who has millions of dollars for Pan Am executive bonuses and manicures for athletes now doesn't have a penny for the dedicated volunteer groups who rely on Trillium.

Speaker, is this government so broke that it can't fund a new program, one that represents 0.02% of its \$136-billion budget, without stealing from vulnerable volunteer organizations?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Again, the tenor of the comment was really not conducive to a proper question when it comes to accusations. I'm disappointed, but I'm just going to let it go and warn the member that if anything else like that happens again in his supplementary, it will cost him his question.

Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

1130

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to start by saying the Ontario Trillium Foundation is one of those organizations that's not only recognized in Ontario as one of those great organizations, but throughout this country and internationally. We're very proud of the work they do.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has invested \$1.4 billion through Trillium since it has come into power. That's a significant amount of money that has been contributed and distributed right across our province. If you look throughout the Legislature, I know that Trillium has an influence in each of our ridings and makes such a huge difference in making sure that we continue to grow and build Ontario to the place we think it should be, and that is being one of the best places on the entire planet to live.

In regard to funding, if you look at the amount that was provided to Trillium last year and the amount that's going to be provided this year, it's actually an increase, so I don't know what the member is upset about. We're going to use Canada 150, and using money to invest in

infrastructure is what this government's all about. We're very proud of our record when it comes to Trillium.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: I really don't understand the minister's spin. If it was such great news, why was it announced at 4:53 p.m. on the Thursday before the Easter weekend?

I know why. It was to bury the fact that they dealt a devastating blow to community groups for whom OTF capital funding is a lifeline. It's more evidence of the price we're all paying for this government's waste and mismanagement. This happened so suddenly, Speaker, that applications were already submitted for the upcoming intake, but the government just dumped them and the thousands of volunteer hours to prepare them right into the shredder.

Speaker, to the minister: Does my Legion have to buy a \$6,000 ticket to a Liberal fundraiser to get access? I'm going to ask the minister, will he admit that he's wrong, and will he reinstate the OTF capital grants program to help those groups whose future he's put at risk?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Coteau: The member opposite knows clearly that the Ontario Trillium Foundation is an arm's-length organization that has the ability to make its own decisions. It has got a board. In fact, we have regional Trillium boards that are set up throughout this province, the grant review teams, that take into account the local needs of the communities before making the decision.

Mr. Speaker, we're about providing opportunity on this side of the House. When we see Canada 150 coming up, we're proud to invest in that initiative and we're so proud of the fact that we'll be investing into infrastructure. You can tell your Legion to contact us directly when those grants come out, and they can apply for funding to increase infrastructure right across this province. We're very proud of our record.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. It is the responsibility of government to lift people up, to make life better and to make sure that people no longer have to work multiple jobs simply to make ends meet. In Ontario, over 750,000 workers are taking home a minimum wage that is simply too low to help anyone get ahead. Right now, we're seeing a powerful movement south of the border that has workers standing up and saying, "It's time for a \$15 minimum wage."

Premier, New Democrats say that it's time to raise the floor for every worker in this province. Will the Liberal government commit to raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for all Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

The Premier went to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, the NDP's sudden interest in the minimum wage certainly is welcome on this side of the House. It's been a long time coming.

We've been working hard to bring minimum wage increases that are consistent, are predictable and are fair to the people in this province. Between 1996 and 2003, the general minimum wage in Ontario was frozen, for nine long years, at \$6.85. We knew we could do better than that, Speaker.

We've made significant changes since then to the process. We've raised the minimum wage nine times. Nobody in North America has a higher minimum wage, other than the District of Columbia. No state has the minimum wage that Ontario has. Ontario has the highest of any province in this country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back to the Premier: At the rate that the Liberals are raising the minimum wage, it will be 2037 before we hit \$15 an hour—and by the way, they just did it in California, so the minister's wrong about that.

Ontario's New Democrats want to make it clear that the Liberals won't stand up for Ontarians and that Ontarians will have a choice to make in two short years to elect one that absolutely will. Fundamental change is needed to address a fundamentally changing workplace.

Premier, what does the government have to say to the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians that are not getting the decent wages they deserve for the hard work that they do every day?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Once again I want to thank the member and I want to thank the party for the interest in this issue. Certainly, it's long overdue, but it's a conversation that we wish we'd had them on board on a little while ago.

Let me reiterate: We've got the highest minimum wage of any province in Canada, higher than any state. With guidance, we've put together a Minimum Wage Advisory Panel. We've got guidance from business, from labour—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Anti-poverty.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: —anti-poverty groups. The NDP made not one single submission to that panel. When you had the opportunity to speak out, you were silent.

Certainly, I think, we can look to the province of Ontario as an example of how you can put in predictable wage increases for people on minimum wage.

In 2019, Speaker, part of the process calls for a review of the process. If we need to do more at that time, I hope this House will.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, yesterday was a very special day for this Legislature. We were joined by first responders from across the province, including my community of Cambridge.

As a former nurse in the emergency department, I worked closely with first responders and gained first-hand knowledge of what they face while doing their job. These dedicated women and men put themselves in harm's way every day, and it can take a toll on their mental health. Yesterday and over the course of this year, they eagerly participated in the legislative process in order to see Bill 163 turn into law.

I was thrilled to see that the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act received the support of every member of this Legislature. It was great to see all members on all sides of the House be able to stand forward for this very important bill.

Speaker, through you to the minister, how will this impact the lives of Ontario first responders?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Labour?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I, too, would like to thank the member for that question.

I think, especially on a day like this, I'd like to show my appreciation to all the members of the Legislature who participated in the debate, who joined the conversation on post-traumatic stress disorder and who are starting to talk more and more about mental health in the workplace.

This bill is something we should all be proud of. It shows what we're capable of when we work together. I think the specifics of Bill 163 are well known throughout this House. Members have participated. It's going to presume that post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosed in first responders is work-related. It's going to allow me, as the Minister of Labour, to ensure that employers of those first responders submit their prevention plans directly to me, and I will make them public.

What I want to focus on is what this really means: We need to deal with people that have PTSD in a dignified way, but we need to prevent it in the first place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I would like to thank the minister for his work and his dedication on Bill 163. It's important—

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Cheri.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's important that we are taking steps to help first responders to get the help that they need.

I know another large part of this issue is prevention. As we know, first responders are twice as likely to suffer from PTSD than the general population, and it's often the accumulation of incidents that causes PTSD symptoms in the first place. We must ensure that supports are in place to help prevent PTSD. It's also important that employers have the resources they need to identify PTSD and support those who may suffer.

Over the weekend, I heard an ad on the radio that addressed this issue. Increasing awareness of PTSD helps families and friends of first responders to recognize possible symptoms.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the government doing to prevent PTSD and to support first responders?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek yelled out, “Thanks, Cheri,” and I think we do need to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for the work that she has done on this issue.

Applause.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you. But I hope all members have also started to hear the awareness campaign that's taking place: the radio ads, we've got guidance out there for employers, it's online. You can go online. You can have the smallest fire department in this province and you'll have access to the same resources as the biggest police department in this province. What we're doing is making sure that we get as much information on post-traumatic stress disorder and how to prevent it out to employers in this province.

I committed to making Ontario a leader in this regard. As a result of the vote yesterday, I think all members of Ontario deserve credit for making us that leader.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry on a point of order.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. If I could just slightly out of order introduce Ms. Peggy Brekveld, the vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Etobicoke Centre?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Speaker. I beg your indulgence.

I just wanted to introduce the students from Kipling Collegiate Institute, under the leadership of teacher Tom Ferguson, who are here with us at Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of weeks ago, I introduced Nick Saul by the title of his former company. Nick Saul is actually president and CEO of Community Food Centres Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: My guests are not here, but I know that a lot of friends have been wondering when I would bring my daughter. She is here, so I will be around outside once we are done here.

How's that for an introduction of guests, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Far be it from me to interrupt an introduction of a baby.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANCER CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I am rising today to highlight Daffodil Month and cancer awareness during April.

As many of you know, April is the month when we proudly wear our daffodil pins to show our strength and courage for those battling or who have battled cancer. The Canadian Cancer Society has done a tremendous job raising funds for life-saving research, information and support services to help end this terrible disease.

In 2015, Ontario saw 76,000 new cancer cases and 28,500 deaths. Prostate cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer and lung cancer are the most prominent in Ontario.

Throughout the month of April, the Canadian Cancer Society will be doing daffodil pinnings across the province in order to promote cancer awareness. This afternoon I was pleased to welcome members of the Canadian Cancer Society to the Ontario Legislature and have my daffodil pinning. For the rest of the month I will proudly wear my pin—provided the House allows me—and encourage all members of this House and members of our communities to do the same.

Cancer is a devastating disease that affects many Ontarians and their families. Cancer does not discriminate. It affects all people—of all races, ages and faiths.

Each year I enjoy attending either the St. Thomas or Aylmer Relay for Life to help raise funds for cancer research.

Until a cure can be found to end this terrible disease, we must ensure that we continue to support the fight against cancer.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad the member brought it up, so now I get to say that unless there is unanimous consent to wear any item on your person, you cannot wear that item until unanimous consent is given. My sensitivity to the announcement was stretched, and when you brought it to my attention, I have to ask the member not to wear the pin until unanimous consent is given. That's usually done through a discussion by House leaders.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would not assume that you would ever do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Correct.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This afternoon. That's wonderful.

Members' statements: The member from Windsor West.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Michelle Helou and her son Noah are exemplary citizens in my riding of Windsor West.

Noah lives with autism spectrum disorder, and for 16 years he received behavioural support services at the Windsor Regional Children's Centre, respite services and out-of-home respite services. However, when Noah turned 18 last September, all the services he enjoyed as a child were suddenly cut off. Noah was then put on a wait-list for Passport funding, the program that is meant to help ease the transition for families as their children enter adulthood.

When he faced an endless wait-list for services, Michelle took matters into her own hands. Michelle and parents living throughout Windsor and Essex county organized a petition drive calling on the government to act to eliminate wait times for all families waiting for Passport funding—not in the same manner they eliminated the wait-list for IBI and ABA services.

I'm thrilled to announce that in the week following World Autism Awareness Day, I have received over 2,000 signatures on a petition calling on this government to support families by eliminating wait-lists for all adult children on the waiting list for Passport funding.

Michelle Helou and my constituents of Windsor West did their part. Now it's time for the government to act.

REFUGEES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Following my welcoming and introduction and the very gracious reception of the Syrian refugees and the folks who accompanied them from yesterday morning, I would just like once again to salute the many members, not only of the Legislature of Ontario but of the government, who have voted and supported the resettlement and integration of these refugees.

Once again, Speaker, with your permission, I would like to salute the visitors who came to us, in particular, the Loqman Yousef Al Masri family and their four children, Adnan, Emad, Mohammed and Jury—little Jury is only four years old; the Bilal Abo Al Hawa family and his wife, Marwa, and their two little kids, Alian and Miral; and the Yasmine Musto family and their four children, Rawan, Areej, Malaz and Mahmoud, and the great people from COSTI immigrant settlement services, Bruno Suppa, Mario Calla, Tanaz Pardiwalla, Mirna El Sabbagh, Lynde Yasui, Mary Gharwal, Yasmine Dossal, Andrea Brambilla and, as well, the gentleman from the Syrian Canadian Foundation who has been instrumental in organizing volunteer efforts, Fares Sultan.

Speaker, as you know, Ontario has committed to bringing 14,000 Syrian refugees to Ontario. That's part of the 25,000-and-counting commitment by Prime Minister Trudeau. I am honoured, privileged, grateful and humbled to be part of a government that supports this.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Laurie Scott: Last week, I had the honour of attending Toronto city council, where Councillor Paul Ainslie brought forward a motion, seconded by Council-

lor Mike Layton, in support of my initiatives against human trafficking. Council unanimously passed the motion in support of my private member's Bill 158, the Saving the Girl Next Door Act, and the report of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment.

The select committee found that Ontario is a major hub of human trafficking, but it doesn't have to be like this. Victims, over 90% of whom are Canadian-born and predominantly female, are lured, manipulated and coerced, often over the Internet, from every part of Ontario. It is in our neighbourhoods and in our communities. Human trafficking targets the girl next door.

We must take immediate action in implementing a multi-jurisdictional and coordinated task force of law enforcement agencies, crown prosecutors, judges, victims' services and front-line agencies. We must foster partnerships with community service providers and other stakeholders to share resources and best practices.

Bill 158 expands and enhances existing laws and serves as a measure of justice. The girl next door is crying out for our help. We cannot continue to stand idly by. We must be aware of and understand the necessary steps to take in tackling this crisis. Having the support of Canada's largest city is encouraging, and we continue to fight against this heinous crime.

JIM FREEMAN

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Today it is my sad honour to stand in this Legislature to pay tribute to a fallen comrade and lifelong activist, Jim Freeman, who passed away on April 4.

Jim Freeman had a long history of labour activism and fighting for a better, fairer and kinder world. At Local 222, he served as the alternate committee person, the chairperson of the political education committee and a member of the Local 222 flying squad.

He was involved in countless NDP and progressive campaigns. He was one of the founders of We Are Oshawa and was an organizer for the Kingston Days of Action. He singlehandedly banged in thousands of signs, carried hundreds of flags and banners, and championed every important issue to make our society more fair.

Jim was a working-class hero. He was the president of our Durham Region Labour Council and served at the OFL. His lifelong friend Sid Ryan said, "He was the best friend that a person could possibly have. Jimmy's love for his community was only outshone by the love for his friends." Everyone loved Jimmy, and Jimmy loved them right back.

I don't know how to fit Jimmy Freeman into a minute and a half or how to pay tribute using only parliamentary language. He was a legend and he was authentic and everyone learned from him; everyone laughed with him. He broadened the movement one personal connection at a time and he showed us a better way forward while making sure no one was left behind.

Some people blaze trails and some people widen them for the rest of us, and Jimmy Freeman did both. He

inspired us to care, to work and to fight, and with his fiery passion, brilliant mind, fantastic stories and awesome humour—often wicked, inappropriate humour—how could we not be inspired?

The ripples of this loss are being felt across the country, but they can't travel half as far as the reach of his impact. He used to remind us of Tommy Douglas's words: "Courage, my friend, 'tis not too late to build a better world." He did build a better world, and he made each of us a little better in the process.

Brother Jimmy Freeman will be terribly missed.

1510

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: This afternoon, I'll be tabling petitions on community water fluoridation signed by tens of thousands of Ontarians from all across the province, and there will be many more thousands of such petitions to come.

Decades ago, researchers noticed that some regions of Ontario had much lower rates of dental decay than others. They found it was because naturally occurring fluoride in the water protected people from dental decay and that when added to community drinking water, fluoride did the same thing.

Wherever communities that once fluoridated drinking water stopped doing it, rates of dental decay have quickly soared. The egregious stupidity of removing fluoridation from community drinking water is based on junk science and outright superstition. The science and the experts are clear: Community water fluoridation is a proven, safe and effective means of minimizing dental decay.

In a 2012 study of oral health by then Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health Arlene King, the study's number one recommendation was: "Conduct a review of current policies and mechanisms to ensure that all Ontarians have access to optimally fluoridated drinking water."

Ontarians everywhere agree. It's time for legislation to make community fluoridation mandatory Ontario-wide. It's the right thing to do.

ONTARIO SCOTTISH COMMUNITY

Mr. Bill Walker: Twenty-five years have passed since this Legislature declared April 6 as Tartan Day in Ontario. So I rise today to recognize the significant contributions of the Scottish community to our province's economic, agricultural and cultural well-being.

Along with the English, Irish, French and our First Nations, the Scottish were among the first to settle and build this great province into a place that all of us are so proud to call home today. They founded villages and they built churches, sawmills, blacksmith shops and, of course, breweries and distilleries just as they introduced us to bagpipes, haggis, Highland dancing and the official Ontario tartan.

My riding is proud to enjoy this heritage. Grey, along with the surrounding counties of Bruce, Wellington and

Dufferin, was settled by these industrious people, the likes of Agnes Macphail and Nellie McClung, both of whom had Scottish heritage and were born in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Quite a few of them have served as members of provincial Parliament. One of them was Bill Murdoch. Murdoch was the MPP who introduced the Tartan Day resolution, which all three parties supported and passed back in 1991. He also introduced and helped pass the official Tartan Act in 2000.

Murdoch, as most of you know, was a colourful and distinctive MPP, very much in line with his Scottish culture and heritage. He was proud of anything Scottish, especially wearing a kilt in Ontario's official tartan, which he donned to express his pride and independence.

As most of you are aware, the 6th day of April is of historical importance to our Scottish community as it marks the anniversary of the declaration of Scottish independence, declared in 1320.

I thank all of those wearing plaid today for paying their respects to Tartan Day and invite all members, many of whom come from different heritages and background, to recognize the significant contributions of our Scottish community in Ontario.

HOSPICE OF WINDSOR AND ESSEX COUNTY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I rise in the House today to extend my congratulations to the Hospice of Windsor and Essex County on the grand opening of their Erie Shores satellite hospice location, the first of its kind in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am the proud member for Burlington. However, I was born in Windsor and lived there for most of my young life. As someone who calls these two cities home, I'm proud to recognize the state-of-the-art palliative and end-of-life care that Hospice of Windsor offers. In fact, Karen Candy, the executive director of Carpenter Hospice in Burlington, travelled to the Windsor hospice recently to compare and discuss best practices.

As we all know, making end-of-life care decisions is a challenging and sensitive topic for patients, families and health care providers alike. That is why we are extremely fortunate to have hospices like the one in my community and the Hospice of Windsor, too.

For over 37 years, the staff and volunteers at the Hospice of Windsor and Essex County have been providing compassionate care to patients and families dealing with life-altering diagnoses. I know this well as my mother, Marie McMahon, has been a volunteer there for over 30 years. Even at age 90, every Thursday she cooks lunch for patients who are dying and for their families. I know she receives just as much as she gives from doing something so close to her heart.

Today, the Hospice of Windsor is taking the next step in serving their community with the grand opening of their new Erie Shores location in Leamington. Now, patients will be able to access the valuable services they

provide closer to home in a comfortable and warm environment.

I'd like to commend the staff and volunteers, including my mother, Marie, of the Hospice of Windsor for their amazing and compassionate work and wish them great success with their new Erie Shores location.

FOCUS FOR ETHNIC WOMEN

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Last week, I attended the Working Centre's annual Mayors' Dinner in my community of Kitchener-Waterloo. This year, the guests of honour were Ari Ariaratnam and Jassy Narayan, and I wish to honour them here today.

Ari was born in a small town near Jaffna in Sri Lanka. Growing up, Ari says that she was greatly influenced by her very generous parents. Two decades ago, she came to Canada and received a warm welcome in the community of Kitchener-Waterloo. She eventually became the executive director of the K-W Multicultural Centre.

Jassy grew up in rural Guyana and only had the opportunity to attend school until grade 8. This certainly did not deter her long service to our community. After moving to Canada and getting involved with the YWCA, Jassy assisted with the settlement of refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Latin America.

While serving together on the board of the K-W YWCA, Ari and Jassy developed a training program for newcomer women. This is how their organization, Focus for Ethnic Women, was born with the aid of other like-minded women in the community. Their mission is to encourage the participation of immigrant and refugee women in our community.

In the years since, Focus for Ethnic Women has created programs including occupational training, English-language instruction, life skills training and many more.

I'm very proud of these women and of the commitment they have made to my community of Kitchener-Waterloo.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

790186 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2016

M^{me} Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr42, An Act to revive 790186 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

Hon. Jeff Leal: I rise in the House today to recognize the important role Ontario's food processing industry

plays in the success of our agri-food industry, and a wonderful new program that will help this sector have an even brighter future.

Ontario's agri-food and beverage sector provides one in every nine jobs in our province and generates over \$35 billion in GDP. To put this in context, the auto sector in the province of Ontario generates about \$35.5 billion in GDP every year. And, of course, this sector feeds people here at home and indeed around the world.

Within the sector, food and beverage manufacturing is one of the largest employers in Ontario, with some 3,000 establishments employing approximately 95,000 people across this province. Mr. Speaker, everybody should know that Toronto is the second-largest food distribution hub in North America.

These businesses employ butchers, electricians, marketers, accountants, engineers, scientists and more. The job opportunities in this sector are as diverse as the food and beverage products this industry makes, and I think we can all agree that it's always good when we can promote job and career opportunities in the great province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell you about the good work that Food and Beverage Ontario, a not-for-profit, industry-led organization, is doing to promote the great opportunities that exist within this sector. With the support of our government and the government of Canada provided through Growing Forward 2, FBO has created a province-wide awareness campaign called Taste Your Future. This campaign aims to draw attention to the abundance of jobs and careers available in the food and beverage processing sector. It will promote 164 programs at 29 Ontario colleges and universities that offer diploma and degree programs, and it will help people learn about the industry, find their place in it and seek their destiny in it.

1520

Long-term, secure employment is tremendously important to Ontario's social and economic health. Opportunities for good, permanent jobs are available in the agri-food sector, and we need to encourage the next generation of agricultural and food processing leaders to seize these opportunities. A healthy agriculture and food sector is crucial to the success of our province, and we want to encourage more Ontarians to pursue careers within the agri-food and beverage processing sector.

That is why this government, your government, is committed to working with partners to support agricultural learning so that it can continue to be a leader in job creation. This is why, to ensure sustainability and success for the agri-food sector in the future, our government created the Food and Beverage Growth Fund, which is part of the province's 10-year, \$2.7-billion Jobs and Prosperity Fund.

Our most recent announcement was a \$5-million investment to help P and H Milling company build its first greenfield flour mill in Ontario in 75 years, to be located in Hamilton Harbour.

Just this past year, I also had the pleasure of announcing a \$1-million investment to help Mississauga's Super-

Pufft purchase and install a new canister crisp line, allowing them to double their production capacity and leverage new market opportunities in over 34 markets.

Overall, our government has invested nearly \$7.5 million, leveraging a total investment of \$62.3 million in projects through the food and beverages fund to boost the productivity and competitiveness of Ontario's food and beverage manufacturing sector. These strategic investments have, in turn, created or maintained over 700 jobs in our province and helped create further growth in the food processing sector. These jobs, and many others that are being created each and every day, need to be filled by innovative and eager young Ontarians. Ontario is an ideal place for the industry to grow and thrive thanks to a growing population, leading colleges and universities, and access to local and export markets.

I applaud the efforts of Food and Beverage Ontario and their new Taste Your Future awareness campaign, and I encourage everybody in this House to keep eating granola bars that are manufactured right in Peterborough. I encourage all my colleagues in the House to visit tasteyourfuture.ca to learn more about the campaign and help spread the word to the people of their communities about the great opportunities that exist in Ontario's world-class agri-food and beverage processing sector.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Michael Chan: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize National Volunteer Week. This year, National Volunteer Week is celebrated across the country from April 10 to 16, and it represents an excellent opportunity to thank and celebrate Ontario's volunteers. They have an enormous impact on all of our lives.

Almost five million volunteers of all ages generously donate their time and talents to a variety of programs, services and causes. Their efforts strengthen our communities and make a real difference to countless people each and every day. Volunteers can be found in every corner of the province and in every sector. They support caregivers, welcome newcomers and refugees, coach teams, support food banks, protect our environment, and knock on doors for worthy causes. For some, volunteering is a one-time event; for others, it is a lifelong commitment. All volunteers deserve our respect, recognition, support and heartfelt thanks.

The Ontario government proudly recognizes volunteers through a number of programs, including the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers, the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students and the wonderful June Callwood outstanding achievement award.

As many of you know, the annual volunteer service awards are up and running in communities across the province until the end of June. This year, more than 11,000 volunteers are being recognized for their outstanding community service. I cannot stress enough how vital volunteers are to Ontario communities.

In a few days, I will have the privilege of launching the ninth annual ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge. Since 2008, more than 181,000 students have participated in ChangeTheWorld, donating hundreds of thousands of hours. Youth gain confidence through volunteering. They develop their talents and skills, expand their personal networks and build valued connections in their communities. This year's ChangeTheWorld campaign runs from April 10 to May 23, with the goal of engaging more than 39,000 young people.

It's important to make sure that volunteering remains a proud tradition in our province for people of all ages. My ministry is committed to strengthening and supporting volunteerism in Ontario through implementing our first-ever volunteer action plan. We are working with the public, not-for-profit and private sectors to promote the value of volunteerism, and we continue to support the legacy of volunteerism from the 2015 Pan Am Games. More than 23,000 volunteers helped make the games a success. As part of this legacy, we developed two initiatives to support volunteerism that continue to this day. Number one: the SPARK Ontario website, which connects thousands of Ontarians with volunteer opportunities in their community. Number two: the PREB-Ontario certificate program, which is used by not-for-profit organizations across the province to recognize volunteers and the skills they have developed through their experiences.

We in government all play an important role in supporting volunteerism. As Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, it's an honour and a privilege for me to recognize our exceptional volunteers across the province and to simply say thank you. I invite all the members of the Legislature to recognize the volunteers in their community next week. I also encourage everyone to attend the volunteer service award ceremonies taking place in communities across the province over the coming weeks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: Food and beverage is one of the few good news—it's a sector that grew by 11% from 2007 to 2012. Ontario, yes, is one of the largest food and beverage manufacturing hubs in North America, perhaps only after Chicago. Los Angeles might have something to say about that as well.

The need for Taste Your Future, the skills program—however, the sector is facing the highest electricity rates in North America, the highest debt load from this government of any subnational jurisdiction, the second-highest combined provincial and federal income taxes, and, of course, rolls and rolls of red tape. A recent survey by Angus Reid: 57% of Canadians say that rising food prices have made it more difficult for them to feed their households. This is tough on low-income earners and young people. It's led to 71% of respondents switching to

cheaper brands. They're cutting back on meat; they're cutting back on fruits and vegetables.

The \$28-million cut to the budget for OMAFRA did not help. There was a reaction from the farm community. There's a Twitter site, @OntarioFarms. The question: "Are you satisfied with agriculture's inclusion in the 2016 budget?" The answer: A resounding 88% said no.

1530

We see a \$28-million budget cut. We know that the Rural Economic Development Program seems to be on the chopping block. OMAFRA lost out on Green Investment Fund initiatives. There's a payroll tax of nearly 4% courtesy of the Ontario pension. The industry will be hit with cap-and-trade fuel taxes, with no compensation in return.

Businesses face ever-increasing input costs—I mentioned the red tape—and, rather than helping, the consensus seems to be that Ontario's latest budget and latest approach continue to hinder.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of our leader, Patrick Brown, and the Ontario PC caucus to recognize National Volunteer Week.

Volunteers are indeed the heart and soul of many organizations across Ontario and throughout Canada. As MPPs, we attend many events happening throughout our ridings and across the province that are run and organized by volunteers. We meet those individuals and organizations who promote volunteerism, and inevitably I am impressed with the commitment and creativity of the thousands of volunteers who make these events possible.

In 2007, nearly half of all Canadians volunteered. Of these volunteers, 40% were involved in two or more organizations. People volunteer their time to an organization because they want to support their community. They want to give back. In 2010, almost all volunteers said that making a contribution to the community was a key motivating factor in their decision.

For those of you who don't volunteer, I'm going to try to scare you now. One beneficial reason to go and volunteer is that it improves our health. An American Journal of Public Health study found that individuals who volunteer are better protected against stress. In fact, individuals who don't give back as much have as much as a 30% higher risk of dying after a stressful event as compared to people who volunteer.

Not only do individuals benefit from volunteering, but activities undertaken by volunteers reduce costs to organizations, which allows them to increase programs within our communities.

There is, however, a barrier to volunteering, and that is the financial cost to get the police record check that is so critical for protection. It is an important cost factor, considering many individuals volunteer for two or more organizations.

That's why I brought forward my private member's bill, which is called the Helping Volunteers Give Back

Act. Bill 79 would allow volunteers to pay for their criminal record check once per year, yet access this record and distribute it to multiple volunteer organizations at no additional cost to the volunteer or the organization. This cost savings initiative would actually encourage more volunteers to donate their time to more worthy causes.

Volunteers are the real heroes in our communities, and I urge the government to show support for the thousands of individuals who want to volunteer by making it easier to do so.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is my privilege and my honour as the MPP for London–Fanshawe to talk about National Volunteer Week. It's so important in our community, no matter where you live, to recognize the invaluable contributions of all the volunteers in Ontario.

National Volunteer Week gives us the opportunity to shine a light on the tireless efforts of those extraordinary people dedicated to making our communities more vibrant, healthy and caring places to live. Most importantly, they do it without asking for praise or a paycheck. They do it because they see the need in their communities and have felt compelled to answer those calls for help personally.

In my hometown of London, I had the distinct pleasure of nominating three incredible women for the Leading Women, Building Communities Award. Today I want to share the work that these generous women have undertaken in my community.

Mandi Fields spearheaded the Tampon Tuesday initiative that has gained momentum to expand to several other communities in Ontario. This important initiative brings women together to network and donate feminine hygiene products to the London Food Bank. The goal is to ensure that women who are facing poverty or homelessness can live with dignity.

Jacqueline Fraser heads Northeast Community Conversations, an organization that promotes open dialogue on a variety of issues including mental health, social marginalization, seniors' issues, neighbourhood safety and bullying. Jacqueline is a tireless advocate for the underrepresented and marginalized, and the NECC was recently asked by the city of London to play a large role in community engagement for the Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty.

Twee Brown is a co-founder of 100 Women Who Care, an entrepreneur and a community volunteer. She sits on the boards of the Boys and Girls Club and the Grand Theatre, and supports the Bring It girls' confidence conference for young women.

Without volunteers, I can't imagine what our institutions and our communities would look like. Luckily, my community is full of amazing men and women and youth who are dedicated to improving the lives of others.

I am thankful to acknowledge our volunteers, not just today but every day, for the work they do and the fact

that they, and they alone, make our community the place that it is and that we are all very proud of.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise on behalf of my NDP colleagues and today, once again, speak about the agri-food sector.

As a farmer, I often say that farmers are the cornerstone of the industry. But if you don't have the processing sector and the distribution sector, all you have is a stone and no industry, and farmers realize that. It's very important that we recognize how much the processing sector and the distribution sector create jobs in this economy. It's incredibly important for the overall province but to farmers as well.

It's important to recognize the food and beverage association of Ontario for their work and their newest venture, Taste Your Future, because we all know that an industry is nothing without its people. To train and to show young people the future careers that they could have in this sector is a very good initiative. I would like to congratulate them.

It's odd, though, that we stand in this House—and the provincial government and the federal government helped contribute—and we congratulate, but we also have to mention the things that the ministry doesn't talk about in this House: the cuts to agriculture; the cuts that could make a difference in creating more jobs in this province.

You know what \$25 million less in the agriculture sector is? That's about the same as the cornerstone of the industry was asking for the risk management program. They didn't get that; instead, they got a \$25-million cut. Those are the things that we should also be talking about if this government is really serious about helping to promote one of the strongest sectors in this province. In the immortal words of Don McCabe, it's number one because you can't eat cars. It's always number one.

If we're really serious, there shouldn't be cuts in the agriculture budget. We can always argue where we should have less and where we should have more, but if you're really serious about the number one industry in this province, the only industry that grew during the recession and continues to grow and has always grown, because it has always been there, just chugging away—and the government thinks, "We'll chip away at it and they won't notice." They are noticing. If you want to help agriculture, don't continue your cuts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs; and

"Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

"Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

"Whereas the freezing of student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind;

"Whereas this situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Sohan.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: This is a petition entitled "Support Families by Eliminating Waiting Lists for the Passport Program Now."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas when children living with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities turn 18, support from the Ontario government drastically changes;

1540

"Whereas families in Windsor-Essex and across Ontario are met with continuous waiting lists when trying to access support under the Passport Program;

"Whereas waiting lists place enormous stress on caregivers, parents, children and entire families;

"Whereas all Ontarians living with ASD and other developmental disabilities are entitled to a seamless transition of services;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate action to eliminate the waiting lists for Passport funding so that people living with ASD and other developmental disabilities and their families can access the support they deserve."

I fully support this petition, will sign my name and send it to the table with page Amelia.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, signed by many thousands of Ontarians. It's entitled, "Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

"Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led ... to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament."

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and send it down with page Maya.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Lorne Coe: I have a petition from the Ontario Medical Association to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

It is dated today, Speaker. I agree with the contents of the petition, I'll initial it and provide it to page Lauren.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition that I am reading on behalf of my colleague Monique Taylor, MPP for

Hamilton Mountain. It is from Kristen Ellison. It is entitled, "Don't Balance the Budget on the Backs of Children with ASD," and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention (IBI); and

"Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

"Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

"Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

"Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government; and

"Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

"Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation."

I completely support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Sabrina to take to the table.

GO TRANSIT

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

"Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and

to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge."

I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to page Jerry to bring to the table.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This is a petition that was collected over the weekend at the Lions Home and Garden Show.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is rewriting the Ontario drug benefit, a change that will force seniors to pay significantly more for prescription drugs starting on August 1, 2016;

"Whereas the proposed increase will force most seniors to pay nearly twice as much for their medication, raising the annual deductible from \$100 to \$170, increasing the co-payment or a fee paid per prescription;

"Whereas prescription drugs make up the largest portion, almost 30%, of out-of-pocket spending for seniors and that the average senior household spends about \$500 a year on regular prescription drugs and requires at least eight types of different drugs each year to stay healthy and maintain their independence; and

"Whereas seniors on fixed income cannot afford to pay more for prescription drugs and should not be forced to skip medications that they can no longer afford to put their health at risk; and

"Whereas there is potential for seniors who skip medications to end up in emergency departments or be hospitalized, the most costly form of health care utilization, thereby significantly increasing the cost of our health care system overall;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the government's plan to hike the costs of seniors' drugs and to work to expand access and make prescription drug coverage more affordable for all Ontarians."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to Chandise to take to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that has been sent to me by Dr. Pierre Bonin, who is a physician in Sudbury. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Lauren to bring it to the Clerks.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

1550

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to page Jack to bring to the table.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005)"—DOLA—"and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I agree with this petition. I give it to page Sohan.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "Better Mental Health Services.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas mental illness affects people of all ages, educational and income levels, and cultures; and

"Whereas one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and only one third of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them; and

"Whereas mental illness is the second leading cause of human disability and premature death in Canada; and

"Whereas the cost of mental health and addictions to the Ontario economy is \$34 billion; and

"Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions made 22 recommendations in their final report; and

"Whereas the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, seeks to implement all 22 of these recommendations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, which:

"(1) Brings all mental health services in the province under one ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"(2) Establishes a single body to design, manage and coordinate all mental health and addictions systems throughout the province;

"(3) Ensures that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario;

"(4) Grants the Ombudsman full powers to audit or investigate providers of mental health and addictions services in Ontario."

I fully support this petition, sign it and give to page Terry.

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have another petition here that's addressed to Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the home inspector industry remains largely unregulated; and

"Whereas homeowners are increasingly reliant on home inspectors to make an educated home purchase; and

"Whereas the unregulated industry poses a risk to consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To protect consumers by regulating the home inspection industry and licensing home inspectors."

I agree with the petition, sign it and give it to page Diluk to bring down to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

OPPOSITION DAY

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: I move that:

Whereas Ontario has had nine consecutive deficit budgets; and

Whereas Ontario pays nearly \$1 billion a month in interest payments; and

Whereas Ontario now carries over \$300 billion of debt due to years of scandal, waste and mismanagement, in particular with the gas plants, eHealth, Ornge and smart meters; and

Whereas the Auditor General has warned that Ontario's debt levels are a heavy load; and

Whereas the Auditor General has identified that the debt burden will lead to the crowding out of front-line services; and

Whereas the crowding out is being realized as this government has fired over 1,000 nurses and threatens to close special education demonstration schools; and

Whereas hospital beds are being closed, the cost of medication for seniors is being raised and funding for doctors is being slashed because of this government's debt and deficit;

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the Liberal government to present a truly credible plan to balance the budget, take immediate action to pay down the debt and to preserve quality education and health services.

Addressed to the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 2. Mr. Brown?

Mr. Patrick Brown: I am happy to rise in support of this motion. The motion addresses the overwhelming debt and deficit the province faces after 13 years of Liberal government. Specifically, the motion calls upon the Liberal government to present a credible plan to balance the budget, as well as to take immediate action to pay down the debt.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to repeat some facts that become no less shocking each time you hear them. Ontario has become the most indebted subnational borrower in the world. Under the Liberals' watch, we continue to see our credit downgraded again and again, most recently by Standard and Poor's.

Budget 2016 was the ninth budget in a row that the Liberals have tabled with a multi-billion-dollar deficit. For the first time in Ontario's history, our debt has passed \$300 billion. I want to let that sink in. That means that every man, woman and child living in Ontario has a share of the debt that is \$22,103.

We continue to have serious concerns about the credibility of the government's numbers. Budget 2016

confirmed that the government is using one-time money from the sale of Hydro One to make the deficit appear smaller. It's also concerning that the Wynne Liberals are dipping into our province's rainy day fund to serve their political interests by artificially lowering the deficit.

But make no mistake. In a couple of years, after these one-time sales are exhausted and the spending continues, this will leave a massive hole in the government's budget. Should our province experience another economic downturn like the one in 2007-08, Ontario will no longer have those rainy day funds. It will be ill-equipped to support families with the services they deserve in their time of need.

It's not just us suggesting that the numbers are questionable; the government's revenue projections for 2017-18 are \$4 billion higher than in the Financial Accountability Officer's best-case scenario that he laid out last fall. Why create an office for independent oversight of the government's financial figures if they completely ignore the independent oversight?

In addition, last year, the Auditor General outlined how debt servicing costs are taking money away from the funding of government programs and cuts to essential government services such as education and health care. The Auditor General calls it "crowding out." The Auditor General also highlighted what we have known for some time: The government has no long-term debt reduction plan.

This is not sustainable. We are already seeing the impact of services being crowded out. Hospital beds are being cut; autistic children older than five are being removed from wait-lists, leaving families with nowhere else to turn; and funding for physicians has been slashed across the board.

To add insult to injury, this is all the result of the Liberal government's scandal, mismanagement and waste. Let me just name a few examples:

- \$1.1 billion wasted on the gas plant scandal;
- \$2 billion squandered on smart meters;
- \$9 billion overspent on renewable energy contracts;
- over \$1 billion spent on bungled electronic health records; and
- the ongoing health care dollars that go towards Liberal bloated administration and bureaucracy, rather than front-line care—rather than patients.

Taxpayers should not be paying for this government's mistakes and this government's mismanagement. This year alone, as a result of the Liberals' governance, the government will be paying approximately \$12 billion in interest on the debt. That amounts to \$1 billion a month. We cannot continue to waste \$1 billion each and every month, paying interest on the debt to foreign creditors. Put simply, that \$1 billion means less money available for services that Ontarians depend on.

Let's put this into context. What is the result? What does \$1 billion mean? What is the result of this government's mismanagement? What does it mean for the people of Ontario? Well, \$1 billion could pay for one year of long-term care for 17,096 seniors; \$1 billion

could have paid for the food of 14,000 families of four for one year; \$1 billion could build 8,000 new affordable housing units. You could even purchase the Toronto Maple Leafs for \$1 billion.

1600

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But you wouldn't want to.

Interjections.

Mr. Patrick Brown: As a few of the Ottawa members have reminded me, you may not want to make that investment.

As Progressive Conservatives, we believe that in order to be socially compassionate, you must first be fiscally responsible. Because of the fiscal irresponsibility of this government, it has meant the cutting and the diminishment of the social infrastructure of the province. Just ask any nurse, just ask any educator, just ask any physician in the province of Ontario, and they will tell you about the cuts we've seen because of this government's mismanagement. By continuing with this fiscal mismanagement, this government is turning its back on the province's most vulnerable.

When the Ontario PC caucus says we're listening to the people of Ontario, we're not exaggerating. For this opposition day, we asked the public what matters most to them and what they wanted to see us raise in the Legislature. The public chose Ontario's debt and deficit as the issue they want to see the government address. The people of Ontario want to see the government demonstrate much-needed fiscal restraint and put forward a credible plan to balance the budget.

The problem is that no one trusts this government. The Fraser Institute confirmed with its most recent report that Kathleen Wynne has the worst fiscal record of any sitting Premier in Canada. The Liberals don't have a solution to balance our budget that doesn't involve tax hikes, service cuts and more asset sales. Voting in support of this motion would be a first step for the Liberals to demonstrate that this government is willing to change, that it isn't the same old same old broken Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Liberal members to show their constituents they are listening and they support this motion. Let's ensure a sustainable and vibrant future for our children and grandchildren. Let's preserve Ontario's quality education and health services. The future of our province depends on it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member from Simcoe North for bringing this motion before us today. It does provide members with an opportunity to highlight, for those who care to listen, exactly what it is that Ontarians have been telling us they need from this government.

The official opposition and the third party share a common belief when it comes to the Liberal government. We agree they have done a horrible job of investing in and making life easier for everyday Ontarians. We agree that Ontario is \$300 billion in debt due to years of

scandal, mismanagement and waste linked to gas plants, eHealth, Ornge and smart meters.

Where we do strongly disagree is on how to solve the problems facing our province. For example, the official opposition have echoed the NDP's long-standing claims that the health care system is in crisis mode, yet they have not echoed our calls for investment in our cash-strapped health care system, a system that is buckling under four years of frozen budgets and core funding, excluded inflationary costs and skyrocketing demands in growth.

We can appreciate that the opposition is working very hard at changing the tone of their policies. However, most of us just can't forget that they too have a legacy of slashing health care budgets. During the 1995 election, Harris also promised to increase health care spending, but once he became Premier, he sang a different tune. As Premier, Mike Harris shut down 28 hospitals throughout the province, and thousands of health care workers lost their jobs. Unfortunately, this is not a new concept in Ontario politics: Campaign on promises of investment, but deliver cuts instead.

Nor are we likely to forget that Tim Hudak's plan, supported by his caucus, was to cut 100,000 public sector jobs, with most of those jobs coming from the education and health care sectors. Hudak claimed it would save money to fire 2,000 health care planning staff and replace them with volunteers, and offload the cost and responsibilities onto our hospitals.

These ideas just don't make sense. The false idea that cutting jobs and services in the public sector somehow creates investments and jobs in the private sector has been disproven time and time again.

Over the past 13 years, the Liberals have deliberately chosen to invest our hard-earned tax dollars in bureaucracy and administration when they haven't been tying it up in scandal after scandal.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): They were so quiet when Mr. Brown was speaking. Now I can't even hear the member from London-Fanshawe.

Continue.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The hard truth is that for most Ontarians, life is getting harder. Families are struggling. Good jobs are hard to find and even harder to keep. Inequality is growing, and the gap between those doing very well and those who are falling behind is only getting wider. The threats to our health care system are masked only by the deep and frightening cuts to education in our province.

Even here in this motion, the official opposition only notes the threat to demonstration schools while failing to recognize that provincial schools which offer supports for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind, deaf-blind or have low vision are also on the Liberals' chopping block.

Two of these schools are in my riding of London, the Robarts provincial school and the Amethyst Demonstration School. The Minister of Education plans to close

them both. She has cherry-picked the schools according to her own words in this Legislature. She has indicated that her consultation process is rigged and is only focused on certain schools. True consultation would not see applications for the next school year suspended, nor would it include hiring freezes on particular schools as well.

I am so proud of the efforts of my colleague from Windsor West, who has done a fantastic job of opposing this unfair and highly damaging course of action—not just in my riding but all over the province.

We are pleased to have members of the opposition once again join our efforts in keeping these schools open. However, it has only been recently that their voices have been found. Frankly, it is entirely out of step with their long-standing history of privatization, austerity budgets and demands for smaller entitlements to now believe their call for investment in education. These are not the answers Ontarians are looking for. They deserve better, and they aren't getting it under this Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I am pleased to rise today and speak to the opposition's motion. When the finance minister announced the budget for 2016, I was proud of our government for achieving a plan that is both compassionate and fiscally responsible. Why? Because this budget is an investment in the people of Ontario. It's an investment in job growth and it's an investment in the long-term prosperity of our province.

This budget builds Ontario up, and it does it by keeping an eye on our spending. That's why I was surprised to see this opposition motion brought forward. There is something for everyone in this budget: something for youth, something for seniors, and something for indigent people and middle- and low-income families. Our investments are significant, and we have a firm plan that is working: working towards eliminating the deficit and balancing the budget. This isn't easy, but we are on track.

Mr. Speaker, I don't understand why the opposition would be critical of that. Our strong fiscal management is achieving results, and the numbers prove it. Again, the government's plan to eliminate the deficit is working. We are on target.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, let me tell what the rating agencies said. Moody's confirmed, "Ontario's 2016 Budget Stays on Track to Balanced Budgets." And DBRS said, "2016 ... Budget: Economic Momentum Keeps Fiscal Plan on Track."

The deficit will be returned to balance in 2017-18. The deficit has already been reduced by close to \$2 billion just since November. We have been ahead of our targets almost from the beginning. For the seventh year in a row, the province is on track to beat its deficit projection. What that means is this: The government is working hard and people are working hard right now to do the right thing. We are focusing on doing away with the deficit to build a strong future for our children and ensure a healthy Ontario economy.

This government's number one priority is growing the economy and creating jobs. Ontario is on track to gener-

ate more than 300,000 net new jobs by 2019, bringing total job creation to more than 900,000 since the recessionary low in 2009. On top of that, our unemployment rate continues to be below the national average. In fact, Ontario's economic growth is now outpacing national growth and is expected to continue being among the strongest in Canada over the next two years.

1610

Just think about it: This is a time when the rest of the country is talking about how challenging it is financially and how challenging it is for provinces when it comes to the economy, but Ontario is leading the way. We're the strongest in Canada. We're doing what governments should be doing: We're creating quality jobs and investing in our people, their skills and their talent.

A key part of ensuring Ontario's continued economic growth is investing in our youth and education. This budget preserves post-secondary education like never before. In fact, what we're doing now is historic. Starting in 2017-18, the new Ontario Student Grant will offer free tuition for students with financial need from families with incomes of \$50,000 or less—free tuition.

Applause.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I think we should be applauding, Minister.

This will open doors to thousands of students who may have thought they would never have the chance to attend college or university. We are ensuring that all our young people, regardless of their financial circumstances, have the ability to get a quality education. That's one of the reasons why I'm here. I'm here because I believe in fairness and I believe in doing everything we can to ensure that the less fortunate in our society get a helping hand and get a start. We're doing that.

It doesn't end there: Tuition will also be more affordable for middle-income families and mature or married students. Think about it: Those single-parent families—people trying to put food on the table and take care of their kids, who have been unable to really further themselves and their education—will now be able to head back to university and further their education and really give their families a start; give their children a bit of a chance to have a brighter future. We're doing the right thing.

We're also taking steps to improve special education in Ontario. Our government is doing a thorough review and speaking with parents across the province to make sure students and families get the services they need. We want to ensure that the system works. That's what Ontarians want; that's why they sent us here. And every now and then we have to do a checkup and ensure that we are doing the right thing. We've heard from Ontarians about what they want, and our government is listening.

In addition, we're investing in our people and jobs. In the 2016 budget, we have committed \$160 billion over 12 years to invest in infrastructure projects. That is the largest infrastructure investment, not just in Ontario's history but in Canada's history. What are we doing? We're making infrastructure investments, we're investing

in our people and we're driving down the deficit. I can tell you that Ontarians know that we are on track. This will not only support the creation of 110,000 new jobs a year; it will also help to move goods more efficiently and allow people to spend more time at home with their families. We are creating jobs by building bridges, by building highways, by building roads, by building public transit and by building hospitals and schools.

Ontario residents also want to know they can depend on a strong and efficient health care system. Our government is increasing funding for our hospitals by \$345 million, and we're supporting our health care by increasing our overall budget by close to 2% a year. That's a huge amount of money. This will help Ontarians get faster access to quality health care they can rely on.

The budget also adds \$75 million over the next three years in community-based residential hospice and palliative care. That takes that number to \$155 million. We're helping out our seniors and helping out families who are facing challenges when they're dealing with some of the things our seniors face when they're aging. We're also adding \$10 million to the BSO. This helps personal support workers get the assistance and guidance they need by investing in them.

This government recognizes the vital role of our nurses in the delivery of quality health care in Ontario. Since 2003, we've had more than 26,000 new nurses employed in their field. This represents a growth of 23.7%, almost 24%. On top of this, the government is making the shingles vaccine free for eligible seniors. We're also adding \$178 million for affordable housing. Now, not only is this a major step toward keeping seniors in good health, but it would save them about \$170 and emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Recognizing that our aging population is increasing, this budget also helps people achieve a more secure retirement. I can't tell you how important that is. We know that not all Ontarians have the ability to save over the years, so we're going to ensure that down the way, down the road, five years from now, 10, 20, those Ontarians aren't coming to us and needing support and assistance. We know that governments will have to step in and help, so what are we doing? We're looking ahead and we're making those investments now. We're making investments in the ORPP because we recognize that this is an investment in our future and it will help Ontarians. After all, why are we here? We're here to ensure that all Ontarians—not just the rich and the wealthy—retire and are able to settle down to a life that will give them a comfortable living after putting in work throughout their lifetimes for us.

Our government is investing strategically in the future of Ontario through responsible spending and debt reduction. First and foremost, we're securing job growth and a healthy economy. We're also staying firmly on track to eliminate the deficit in 2017-18.

All of this is being done alongside significant investments in education—as I mentioned—in health care, in housing, in our seniors and in our environment. We're

taking care of people and their needs. That's why they gave us the mandate they did to be here today. We are trying to do the best we can in ensuring that we have a strong foundation for the future of the people of this province. This is a budget that is fiscally responsible, compassionate, and will result in the long-term prosperity of all residents in our province and our people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's absolutely a pleasure to stand today and support my leader, Patrick Brown, and our PC caucus on an opposition day motion.

We came to this place to try to make it better. We've tried to work with the Liberals. Yet, at the end of the day, they didn't even give consideration to the three things we asked for in the budget. We're very concerned with where they're going. They continue to say it's about revenues. They've had record revenues every year: in 2014-15, \$118.5 billion; they had \$115.9 billion in 2013-14; and \$113.4 billion in 2012-13. So it's not an issue of more money; it's how they address those.

We, as our leader said, have as a province just passed the \$300-billion debt mark. That's absolutely shameful. To think of the money that we're putting on our grandkids and kids—and I hear members opposite talk about how much they're investing. At whose cost is that? They're trying to buy today, but they're selling our kids and grandkids down the road. There is \$22,103 of debt for every man, woman and child living in Ontario: \$12 billion. That's \$1 billion a month that we're not spending on health care, on affordable housing, on education, on those people who are less fortunate or our seniors.

As seniors and long-term care critic, I've continually asked this government—they committed and promised to the people Ontario two elections ago to refurbish 30,000 long-term-care beds. Just as recently as the last estimates committee that I went to, I asked them to just even give me the plan of where those beds would be built and when. They can't even give me that.

There are a lot of concerns that I have. It come back to trust of this government, to ensure that they're actually listening. We asked them for a couple of very simplistic things: strive towards a credible plan for a balanced budget, make sure front-line health care services are there and reduce your deficit from year to year. They hit none of those. My constituents see this government, marked by scandal, waste and mismanagement, as a sorry state of affairs.

1620

Scandals: \$1.1 billion wasted on the cancelled gas plants with not an iota of power to ever be shown to the people of Ontario; \$2 billion spent wastefully on smart meters that, for the most part, we keep hearing from constituents across this great province don't work; \$9 billion that they've tried to sell to the great people of Ontario on renewable energy, which we know is not accomplishing the job, is not accomplishing the efficiency, and is certainly not giving us the opportunity.

With this government, everyone assumed they were getting trains, roads and bridges in addition to public

utilities and better health care. Where is it? I still don't see any new transit here. I don't see, certainly, that we're getting any better roads or bridges. They keep talking about all of this wonderful infrastructure, and certainly they talk about all the municipalities that are so happy with this infrastructure. Well, I can tell you that the municipalities in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound are certainly not happy with where they are with their infrastructure at this point.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked significantly in this House in regard to the sale of Hydro One. Today, the Deputy Premier stood up and said they listened to the people of Ontario. Eighty-five per cent of Ontarians are telling them, "Do not continue with the fire sale of Hydro One," and what are they doing? They're going out and promising that they are moving forward again. At the end of the day, it's going to be coincidental to see—and I think what they are trying to do is they're going to come out in 2018 and, with all these fire sales, perhaps balance the budget. But the Financial Accountability Officer—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: —is challenging them. They are selling the assets; they're selling everything that they can to try to make themselves look good for an election year. But I ask the question that I trust most Ontarians are asking: What happens after that? As my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke just said, it's a structural deficit. We need to address it and change it. We need to look beyond just the next election cycle. We need to not be self-serving and only looking at how we can make our books look good. We need to ensure it's there historically.

At the end of the day, this is happening—and this is being said by the Auditor General. He has identified that the net burden will lead to the crowding out of front-line services. The crowding-out is being realized as this government has fired over 1,000 nurses and threatens to close special education demonstration schools, which my colleague and seatmate from Prince Edward county is working diligently to try to stop. The Auditor General talked about hospital beds being closed, the costs of medication for seniors being raised, and funding for doctors being slashed because of this government's debt, deficit, mismanagement, scandal and incompetence.

In Barrie alone, 50 positions are going to be eliminated at Royal Victoria hospital. In London, St. Joseph's Health Care will cut 49 full-time positions, seven part-time and four casual. They will also cut 12 temporarily funded transitional care beds from Parkwood Institute. All across Ontario, LifeLabs is being forced to close its laboratory testing facilities because demand for testing has increased but the funding has not. It only makes sense, with our baby boom demographic moving toward us at a fairly rapid pace, that the costs are going to continue, and yet they're cutting service. Does that make sense to you, Mr. Speaker? I would suggest, in the conversations I've had with you, definitely not. In my own backyard, Hanover LifeLabs actually reduced operating hours. We have one of the highest seniors' popula-

tions in the province. Again, it only makes sense that they're going to need more care as they get older, with the more challenges they face with their health care, and yet there are less hours to serve them.

It truly is mind-boggling to be in this House every day and hear this government applaud themselves and say how wonderful and how rosy it is. I'm wondering if they ever walk outside and actually have chats with the average Ontarian who can't pay their hydro bill that has doubled, tripled and quadrupled over their 12 years of mismanagement. They are predicting it's going to double to triple over the next four years again. Have they talked to small, medium or large businesses about the costs of operating and why businesses are really struggling to maintain? They try to throw it back on our government as opposition, that we don't stand up for Ontario. No, it's exactly the reverse of that. We are standing here to say we want Ontario to be the leader of Confederation again. But we have to make decisions and we have to make choices, at the end of the day, that are going to ensure we have the care and the support for people at the time they need them. We can't continue to run deficits and just say, "We'll get to it later."

Those pages in front of you, Mr. Speaker: We're burdening and saddling them with the poor decisions of this government today, and they are going to pay for that for many, many years. I don't have grandchildren yet, but I'm already fearful that we're going to actually put them in a situation where they may never get out of debt.

We want and we will continue to call for this government to present a credible plan on affordable energy, proper management of health care and a credible plan to balance the budget. We'll ask them to vote for this opposition day motion to ensure that that happens going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure to rise today, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to speak to the motion before this House that has been brought to us by the leader of the official opposition. Certainly, there are a number of references in this motion that resonate with me. The motion talks about "scandal, waste and mismanagement, in particular with the gas plants, eHealth, Ornge and smart meters."

I am somebody who came to this House in 2013, when concerns about the mismanagement of gas plants was front and centre in the minds of the people of London West. London West was, quite frankly, ground zero for the gas plant scandal, because it was Chris Bentley's resignation that created the opportunity for me to run in the by-election. London West was also ground zero for the diluted chemotherapy drugs. Over half of the patients who received those diluted drugs lived in London; they were going to London Health Sciences Centre.

So, Speaker, I know something about the impact of Liberal scandal and mismanagement. I know how that affects people in my riding of London West. Quite frankly, right now, almost three years since my election, I

still feel that London is at ground zero in terms of Liberal mismanagement, particularly in the health care sector. You can't get up in the morning in my community and open the London Free Press without reading another scathing indictment of how government has failed the citizens of this province and, in particular, how it is failing the residents of my community in London.

Just last December, before the Christmas break, we heard about 500 surgeries being delayed and postponed, at the direction of the government, because of the government's flawed funding formula that allocated a set amount for surgeries regardless of the need of patients to get these surgical procedures done. Hospitals were instructed to trickle patients over a 12-month period; to make sure to space them out so that the funding would last. Quite frankly, this is contrary to what a lot of doctors believe they should do—believe it is their commitment to patients—which is to address a patient's need; if a patient has a need for surgery, to get that surgery completed in a timely manner so that the patient is the purpose for the health care system. The system doesn't exist without the needs of the patients. Instead, we saw hospitals directed to slow the queue of patients; in particular, to hold off elective surgeries that potentially could very seriously compromise the health of patients.

One of my constituents was waiting for a hip replacement. He was told it was going to be almost two years. In the meantime, his doctor told him it was quite likely that he wouldn't be able to walk any longer by the time he was able to access that surgery. It could potentially seriously undermine his physical well-being. He was put at much greater risk of falls and any number of complications that could arise because of the delay in that surgery.

That was in December. Later, in February, just a couple of months ago, we heard about the shortage of hospice beds and palliative care in my region. There are 26 beds in the South West LHIN. Experts say that three times as many palliative care beds are needed to address the aging population and the demographic realities of people as they age and spend their final years. We know that without access to these palliative beds, people end up spending their final days in hospital.

1630

In 2012 to 2013, which is the most recent data available, 54,230 patient days were spent in London hospital beds among palliative patients who were unable to have their right to die at home respected, who were unable to access a palliative care bed because we don't have a system that can support them in doing that. Instead, we have a system that spends thousands of dollars more on hospital beds because we don't have the community care available.

In March, just last month, we heard about the demand for psychiatric care at Victoria Hospital, which required a classroom to be converted into an emergency ward because the hospital was being overrun by critically ill psychiatric patients who didn't have access to beds, because once again, we saw that 22 of those beds that are in the psychiatric emergency ward were occupied by

people who have nowhere else to go. There was no way to admit new patients who were coming into the ward.

We heard about a patient with Alzheimer's who had to spend eight days on the floor of the emergency ward. At the same time the Alzheimer Society of London and Middlesex is reporting a 50% increase in caseloads over the last two years because of the growing need for dementia specialization to help people with complex needs in our community.

There is a lot that has to be done to address the crisis in health care in the province and in my community, and this motion won't do anything that is needed to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Always a delight for me to have the opportunity to, as I'm fond of saying, stand in my place and lend my voice to the discussion and the debate that's taking place this afternoon here in the Legislature on an opposition day motion brought forward, as I understand it, from the leader of the official opposition. I think I have that correct.

I've had a chance to hear some of the discussion and debate that has taken place over the course of the afternoon. I know some of my colleagues have, I believe, already spoken and more will be speaking after me on this particular motion.

I know that you know, Speaker, that I've served here in the Legislature for the last three years and a bit—almost four years coming up this fall. But when I read a motion like this one—I say it still as a relative newcomer to this Legislature—I have to admit that I'm a little bit taken aback. I'm a little bit shocked.

This is one of those motions, as I glance down at the text of the motion itself, that strikes me as more than passing strange. The leader of the Conservative opposition here in this chamber—notwithstanding the very important and pertinent history that took place or that existed or that occurred when that party was last in power—now seems to be in a situation where he has put forward a motion suggesting, rather magically, that we should, like they, the Conservatives, did when last in power, slash and burn and cut to the bone, literally, core public services in many important sectors and at the same time balance the books because of that slashing and burning, but at the same time invest in health care and education.

I'm paraphrasing, but that is essentially the gist of it: “balance the budget ... pay down the debt ... preserve quality education and health services.” That's actually a quote from the last paragraph of this particular motion. Again, it's a bit of that bizarre kind of fictitious approach to governing.

Though I'm still a relatively new MPP at three and a half or close to four years, I have been around the political scene as an activist in our party for a number of years. I can remember working in Toronto on the campaign in the riding of Willowdale in 1995, when then-leader of the third party, Mike Harris, went on to—not Michael Harris,

but Mike Harris—put forward the Common Sense Revolution.

This actually has a significant flavour of what was put in front of the people of Ontario in 1995: “We’re going to be able to reduce your tax burden”—at that time I think it was a 30% tax cut that they had committed to—“we’re going to cut the debt, we’re not going to take any money out of health care or education and we’re going to get the economy back on track and do all those magical things.”

People of Ontario, for all kinds of reasons that I won’t get into this afternoon in debate, chose to support, as they can in a democracy, that particular—and who wouldn’t, frankly? Who wouldn’t support that kind of political fiction, as we learned that it turned out to be post-1995?

Because, of course, we know, looking back in retrospect, that over the next eight or nine years—whatever the exact term was through both the 1995 and 1999 campaigns—that the Conservative Party that Mr. Brown now leads, which has put forward this motion today, did exactly the opposite in many respects of what they had committed to the people of Ontario to do. Not only did they literally eviscerate core public services—they did, Speaker—like health care and education; not only did they mock and ridicule key participants in the health care system by comparing, for example, nurses to hula hoops; not only did they close hospitals in community after community after community; they did all of these things and so much more.

I remember the quote that the former Premier used during the 1995 campaign—I’m blessed with a good memory, Speaker: “We will not take one cent out of the classroom for our education system.” Imagine that, eight, nine years later. Imagine how those people in communities—including my own community—who back then supported that particular approach must have felt when they saw, again, the chaos and the crisis that was created in health care, in education and in all of those other crucial areas that people rely on their provincial government to provide.

I could say, as Minister of Transportation, that I think when people look back to that era, they realize that when politicians come forward and either create election platforms or motions, such as the motion that we’re debating here this afternoon, that are based on that kind of fiction, on that kind of political wizardry, I guess, if you can call it that—people now know better in the province of Ontario.

In the transportation realm alone, not just health care and education, they know that when any politician walks out there and says, “I’m going to find a way to magically cut everything, keep your taxes low, charge nothing else for anything else and still massively increase your transit options”—when that kind of politician, who is not being, perhaps, as transparent as they otherwise should be, gets the reins of power, the people of this province know what happens. They know what happens because they’ve seen it before when the Conservatives were last in power in this place. They saw subway projects brought forward by the NDP when they were in power not only stopped—

that would be difficult enough to grasp; I say this as someone who has lived here in this region my whole life—or delayed or paused, but actually cancelled. The Eglinton subway line was cancelled and the tunnels that had been burrowed to that point filled in.

Imagine that today, here in the province of Ontario, here in the GTHA, we are spending \$5.3 billion to build the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, the single largest public transit project in Ontario history. We’re doing it not only because it’s necessary and it will create jobs and improve quality of life and be transformative for this region; we are doing it because 10, 15, 20 years after the fact, we are trying to make up and we will successfully make up for the horrific mistakes of the Conservative ideology that underpins the motion we are debating today, the Conservative notion that you can kind of have it all and that asks of people, the electorate and voters, to just close your eyes and wish hard enough and everything will work out. That’s on the investment side in health care and education and in transit and transportation and so many other realms.

The fiction doesn’t end on the investment side; the fiction ends on the fiscal side. Because, of course, even if you didn’t serve as an elected official in this chamber back in 2003, it would be hard for people not to remember, notwithstanding the fact that in the last year or so in which they held power, they told everybody—when their then-finance minister and some who still serve in that caucus today in this chamber were in that caucus then, they said literally to the people of Ontario, “The books are balanced because of our Conservative ideology, because we’ve managed to keep spending down and cut taxes and build the economy.” They claim all of those things took place, but we know, really and truly, that they didn’t quite take place the way they suggested they did.

We know, at the end of it all, that when then-Premier Dalton McGuinty called in the former Auditor General—and, by the way, today’s motion is replete with mentions of today’s Auditor General, but when the then-retired Auditor General was brought in to review the books that were left—

Interjection: Mr. Peters.

1640

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Peters, Erik Peters. We know that on the fiscal side, Mr. Speaker, that Conservative ideology really is more myth than fact; and this has been proven in jurisdictions not just here in Ontario, but well beyond Ontario. We know that, notwithstanding their claims that their magical formula had done all of these wonderful things—which it didn’t, on the investment side. We also know that in fact there was a \$6-billion hidden deficit that existed. It wasn’t me saying it and it wasn’t the former Premier saying it. It was, in fact, a retired Auditor General from the province of Ontario.

It begs the question. It really begs the question for those watching at home, certainly those who live in my community of Vaughan: Why would Ontarians ever want to go back to that kind of chaos, that kind of fictitious political environment in which political leaders put

forward motions like the one that we're debating today and, back then, as I referenced a second ago, put forward platforms that suggest that this philosophy that's here very clearly at the heart of the motion that Mr. Brown has brought forward is the exact same ideology? It's the exact same philosophy that weaves through it. The difference, I would argue, is that in 1995 the good people of Ontario, for reasons at that time that were germane and relevant, didn't have—did not have—at their fingertips the sense of the history of what had taken place when this kind of ideology was foisted upon them.

Today, in 2016, in 2017 and in 2018, the people of Ontario, the people that we all represent, whether they're from Niagara Falls or from Vaughan or from Hamilton or Kitchener-Waterloo, wherever they reside in the province, know that the philosophy that's at the heart of not only this motion but of Mr. Brown himself and that Conservative opposition—they know that the numbers don't add up. They never add up. And we get less investment. We get nurses ridiculed. We have schools that don't open, schools that are crumbling. We have fewer hospitals opening.

Not that many months ago, I was proud to stand in my community—actually, right at the edge of Canada's Wonderland—alongside the current Minister of Health. We released the request for proposals for the brand new Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital. This is a project that I've been working on not only as the MPP for this community, but also, I would say, as a former activist or volunteer in my community. We released the RFP. We will start construction of that hospital later this year. This is just one example of a philosophy and a government and an approach to building the province up, where we don't base our assumptions, we don't base our philosophy, we don't base our platforms or our budgets, we don't base our debate in this chamber, on fiction.

I guess if I was being generous, Speaker—and I try from time to time to be generous to both opposition parties in this chamber. But I would say that perhaps it's forgivable because Mr. Brown is a relative newcomer. I'm a newcomer, but he's even more of a newcomer to this chamber. I would have thought that as someone who has served, in his case, in public life for a number of years in his home community, in the federal House of Commons and now here in the Legislature, after seeing various forms of governing and approaches to this—and coming from a community as he does in Simcoe, from Barrie, from that whole area up there, where I was last week—I would have thought that Mr. Brown would understand that past approaches to getting it so wrong as a Conservative are not the best way to go forward.

Alas, Speaker, we see with this motion here today that we're debating that, in fact, he hasn't. In fact, he's trying to go right back to that horrible past where we had crises; we had chaos; we weren't building the province up; we weren't fixing the fiscal issues that were here in the province at that time. Deficits were left over; hospitals were closed; schools were crumbling; nurses and doctors ridiculed; teachers ridiculed—so much more, Speaker.

It is fundamentally why since 2003, at every single opportunity when the people of Ontario have had the chance to consider, do they want that approach that Mr. Brown and his party are espousing today with this motion, or do they want an Ontario Liberal government approach that builds the province up, makes rational and balanced investments, tries to work with everyone else and move the province forward, four times—four times, Speaker—in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2014, it would come as no surprise to any sensible Ontarian that the people of this province made the right choice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for that enthusiastic introduction today.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand before you in this House to discuss an issue that is important, not only to my constituents in Kitchener-Conestoga and Waterloo region, but to all Ontarians: this province's crippling debt.

Although this issue is current and relevant, its history is deeply ingrained in this province. Please let me provide some historical context into the looming debt we are all up against. It was CBC's Mike Crawley who recently pointed out that the last time an Ontario finance minister balanced the budget, George W. Bush was in the White House, the iPhone wasn't yet available in Canada—good thing; I'm the home of BlackBerry, of course—Mats Sundin was captain of the Maple Leafs, people were still renting DVDs from Blockbuster and Justin Bieber was performing in talent shows on the steps in Stratford.

Unfortunately for everyone in Ontario—my parents' generation, my generation and my children's generation—we can't even begin to have a conversation regarding a finance minister balancing a budget because, quite frankly, it is that far out of reach as it stands today. This is because the Liberal government keeps making the same mistakes over and over again. As we have said in this House on multiple occasions, life is harder under the Liberals, and this has been true for a staggering 12 years.

When the Liberals took power in 2003, Ontario was the seventh most indebted province. Thirteen years of Liberal rule later, Ontario is now the second most indebted province after Quebec. By next year, we're predicted to be the most indebted province in Canada. This government's fiscal mismanagement means more spending to pay down more debt interest. It means that nine cents of every tax dollar collected by the provincial government in revenue is being spent on interest payments. It means less money available to invest in the priorities of Ontarians, both now and in the future.

In fact, this year, according to the Wynne government's own projections, interest on debt payments will cost Ontario taxpayers \$1 billion every month. Can you imagine? Again, the interest payments on Ontario's debt have now become the third-largest expenditure in this government. That does not go toward health care, education, social services or infrastructure. That goes

nowhere but to the bank; to foreign credit bondholders who invest in their infrastructure, not ours. It goes to banks that are uncertain about Ontario's future. And why shouldn't they be uncertain? We haven't kept our fiscal house in order for over a decade under Liberal rule.

Yet the spending continues as the Liberals just keep swiping the province's credit card. Swiping or tapping it just everywhere, piling up more debt on the next generation: swipe, tap, swipe—out of touch with reality and out of touch with how it affects the people of Ontario. As interest spending continues, the cuts to front-line services continue. We see the continued toll from ongoing wasted spending that has taken funding from where it is most needed and led to cuts throughout the province.

The Premier was elected on a promise of no cuts to front-line health care workers. Yet, again and again, we see the complete opposite, with Grand River Hospital in my region being the latest to announce cuts: 30 vacant positions being slashed and layoff notices given to 38 others, including nurses. Make no mistake: These cuts fall at the feet of this Liberal government and its fiscal mismanagement. Unfortunately, when billions are wasted on gas plants and non-existent eHealth registries, it means less for the priorities we actually care about most.

Quite frankly, there is an ongoing concern with the way this government handles its money, and the spending choices made for our health sector continue to highlight that reality. With all our promise and potential, this reality hits hard. But what hits even harder is that, for generations, Ontarians have been paying into a system that is expected to take care of us when we can't take care of ourselves. It is supposed to take care of our children when they're making their start in their adult lives, and yet because of years of fiscal mismanagement under the Liberal government, there will be nothing left to take care of them.

1650

We live in a world where parents expect to provide their children with better lives than they had themselves, but after 12 years of tax-and-spend Liberal rule, we will be leaving them with less. That is not the cycle of human nature. It is not the cycle of fiscal responsibility. It is not the cycle of social responsibility, and it is not a cycle I feel comfortable with continuing as a member of this House.

The Liberals are mortgaging our future—Ontario's future—on a generation that doesn't even have a running start due to government fiscal financial mismanagement. In fact, the Premier herself has stated that nobody wants to imagine a future where their children and grandchildren don't have a future. Well, we couldn't agree more, Speaker; she's right. It's not only our children; it's also our grandchildren and future generations who are going to be paying for the Liberal fiscal mismanagement in Ontario.

It is because of this that the opposition has come here today for one reason and one reason only: We actually want to build a better Ontario. The first step is finally taking aim at getting this province's finances in order.

The Premier needs to clean up the mess she and her predecessor have created. It's time for immediate action to balance a budget that hasn't been balanced in their 12 years and time for real solutions to pay down the provincial debt to allow investment into our priorities, such as community health care, and remove the heavy debt burden this government has allowed to compromise the future of our next generation.

Speaker, I appreciate the time given today. I want to remind those watching at home that everything we do we put on a credit card, and it's those future generations that will be concerned most about the actions we make today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is with great pleasure that I get to stand in the House today on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West to join the debate on PC opposition day.

I don't think it's a secret that life is getting harder for most Ontarians with the rise of unstable and low-paying jobs or, as the Liberal government likes to call it, a contemporary mobile workforce; the rising cost of hydro, which is only going to increase as the Liberals charge full steam ahead to sell off our public hydro; and the cuts to services, such as health care and supports for families of children with special needs. It is clear not only to New Democrats but people across the province that the Liberals are not building Ontario up. In fact, they are tearing Ontario down.

The pre-budget hearings were a farce. Over 140 witnesses appeared in person and another 114 written submissions were presented before the all-party legislative committee. That's not including the scores of people who participated in the Minister of Finance's separate consultations.

The budget was tabled far earlier than in previous years. Rather than being released in April or May, the budget was tabled in February. Factor in the reality that the budget is sent to the printer many days prior to public release, and that the entire document has to be translated to French. Key decisions are made well in advance of sending the budget document to print, and it is clear to Ontarians that the budget was already written during the time the Liberal government was supposedly consulting with the public. What this tells us in this House and those across the province is that the Liberal government wasted the time of the members on the legislative committee, the time and efforts of those who presented to the committee in person, and they disregarded the written submissions.

For a government that claims to be open and transparent, they aren't behaving in a manner that is open to input and ideas, and they aren't transparent about the fact that, like the rush to sell off our public hydro system, despite 80% of Ontarians saying they don't support the plan, they really don't care about what Ontarians want. They only care about what the Liberal government and their wealthy friends want.

While I'm on the topic of the sell-off of Hydro One, I'd like to speak about the Conservative Party's current call to stop the sale. Speaker, I don't think anyone in this room is fooled by the smoke-and-mirrors approach the

PCs are taking on the hydro sell-off. Everyone in this chamber knows that the Conservatives also want to sell our publicly owned hydro; they have their own plan on how to do it and which friends of theirs it will benefit.

I'd like to talk about jobs for a moment. Chrysler, FCA, in Windsor, in my riding specifically, recently had 1,200 new hires, and that's not including the spinoff jobs from the feeder plants. Those were both production workers and skilled trades. The Liberal government stood up and claimed victory for those hires. Yet, they didn't acknowledge that it was the hard work of the people within the plant itself that led to the high production, the quality product and, then, the new hires.

On the topic of auto jobs, the new leader of the PCs, when he was a member of the federal party, stood with his fellow members in caucus and did nothing—nothing—to support our auto sector. In fact, they preferred to watch workers in Canada, one by one, get on the unemployment line. The previous leader of the Ontario PCs, when asked about supporting the auto sector, said, “We don't pick winners and losers; let it die.”

Albert Einstein once said that logic will get you from point A to point B, but imagination will get you everywhere. The PCs clearly have an imagination as they don't appear to have a real stance on anything. Once upon a time, in an election not too far away from today, everyone knew clearly what the Conservatives stood for. But lately, thanks largely to their new leader, Patrick Brown, they seem to feel whichever way they think will get them elected and form government in 2018. The problem with that is that what they say and do from one day to another, sometimes hour by hour, is frequently contradictory.

There's another saying, Speaker, and it certainly applies to the PC Party: “When you stand for nothing, you will fall for everything.” Clearly, the PC Party doesn't truly stand for anything anymore and has fallen for the idea that Ontarians would accept a government that says whatever they feel necessary to get elected and then do whatever they want, even if it contradicts what they claim to stand for leading up to and during an election campaign.

I think it's on that premise that we are here today debating this motion. If the PCs are pointing out that this way of thinking isn't working for the Liberals, then perhaps they need to take a long, hard look in the mirror, figure out what they really stand for and proudly share that with Ontarians. They should be proud of their stance on topics important to Ontarians, shout it from the rooftop and wear it like a badge of honour. Do away with the smoke and mirrors and stop trying to fool Ontarians: Tell us how you really feel.

On the topic of health care, nearly 12,000 nurses have been fired across the province. Under this Liberal government, we can likely expect more cuts. In Windsor, 169 RNs were handed their pink slips on Family Day this year—Family Day, Speaker. The Liberal government has picked a fight with our doctors; wait times for long-term care beds are out of control; and many people with mental health issues can't access the community supports they need. Seniors were under the threat of having their

prescription drug costs increased by nearly double. I'd like to say thank you to the thousands of Ontarians who worked with New Democrats to pressure this government to reduce course on that wrong-headed plan.

The head of the Ontario Dental Association told us that Sarnia's hospital has been forced to cut operating room time for dentists to practically nothing. Speaker, as a former dental assistant, I can tell you that dental health plays a key part in overall health. To be cutting operating-room time for dentists, who are often doing procedures when we have children with rampant decay and they need to be put out in order to have that treated, or when we have young children who need a root canal or an extraction and it can't be done in-office—if these conditions are not treated right away, they can affect the overall health of a patient. In fact, many don't know that if an abscess in the mouth is left untreated, it can cause infection in your body and you can die.

1700

The Conservatives speak about the need to stop cuts to our public health care, to ensure access to health care services for all Ontarians, and halt the losses of our front-line health care providers, such as nurses. The Conservatives ran on cutting 100,000 public sector jobs in the 2014 election campaign. That wasn't that long ago. I ask them: How many doctors and nurses would have been part of the 100,000 job cuts and how much would it cost taxpayers out of pocket for the health care services they needed once the Conservatives privatized health care? What would be the real cost to the physical and mental well-being of Ontarians once the Conservatives satisfy their high-priced corporate friends by selling out our public health care system?

I have limited time to speak, so I want to speak about something else that's near and dear to my heart, which is also, coincidentally, my critic portfolio: education.

The motion before us talks about supporting education. With a cut in education of \$430 million in the 2016 budget and prior cuts in previous years that total over \$1 billion—that's \$1 billion in the last three years—it is clear that the Liberal government is not investing in our education system. We see cut after cut after cut which result in a loss of programming and a loss of the front-line workers, the education workers in our system.

In order to truly and support our publicly funded education system, you must acknowledge, appreciate and respect the invaluable service of education workers: the front-line workers that are the heart and soul of our education system, the very people working in our schools and other educational facilities who clean up after, console, counsel, encourage, educate and help shape the minds of the students our education system was built to serve.

It is very clear that both the Conservatives and the Liberals don't value education workers. We only have to look to legislation passed in September 2012 and again in 2015. The first bill, which passed in 2012, imposed contracts on education workers and deprived them of their rightful process of collective bargaining. Both Bill 115 and, later, Bill 103 stripped teachers of their right to

strike. The government threatened to dock the pay of the lowest-paid education workers in the education sector if they exercised their right—and that's important—to do their job exactly as described in their employment contracts.

Language about education workers used by both the Liberals and the Conservatives in the recent past has created a very negative and unfortunate view of the professionals we trust in the care and education of our children and grandchildren. They use education workers as collateral damage to gain political points.

To finish, I want to draw attention to the piece in the motion that speaks to keeping demonstration schools open. Demonstration schools are in place to assist students with severe learning disabilities. It's not that these students can't learn; they can and they do. In fact, with the specialized supports provided in demonstration schools, students not only succeed but they excel.

Demonstration schools provide focused supports and learning that isn't available in a student's home school within a district school board. Demonstration schools provide an educational environment that is vital to the success of the students who attend them and is complementary to the education that students receive once they finish their program and return to their home school. Myself and my New Democrat colleagues fully support keeping demonstration schools open. There is no doubt about that, Speaker.

We also support and have led the fight, along with members of the deaf community, to not only draw attention to the importance of provincial schools for the deaf but to keep them open as well. Provincial schools for the deaf were left out of this motion. Provincial schools provide an ASL—American sign language—or QSL—Quebec sign language—environment where students who are deaf or hard of hearing thrive. It is vital to the success of these students that they be provided an education in an ASL or QSL environment.

It was a huge oversight on the Conservatives' part to leave provincial schools for the deaf out of this motion. I tabled a motion on March 22 of this year calling on the government to recognize the success and importance of both provincial and demonstration schools, to ensure that no provincial or demonstration school would close as a result of current consultations and to reopen the enrolment at all provincial and demonstration schools. I hope that I can count on my colleagues in both the Conservative and the Liberal caucuses to support my motion when it is debated on April 14. I thank you for the time that I've had to speak today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's interesting that this comes forward, because this particular motion reminds me of the commercial you used to see on television years ago that said to spend like Santa and save like Scrooge. That's what this motion is all about.

When the member for West Lincoln and Glanbrook was the leader—we know him in Niagara Peninsula as Tim Hudak—at least he was consistent. You knew where

he stood. You could disagree—and by gosh, I disagreed with my friend from West Lincoln many times—but you knew where he stood. He was consistent. He honestly believed that which he was putting forward. You didn't have this show in question period of one question coming up, "Please save money; please eliminate the deficit; please cut taxes. Oh, by the way, spend on the following things." So I admire him for that.

I admire him, as well, because he was prepared to take on some difficult issues. When they asked about GO trains to Niagara, candidates were saying, "Yes, it should happen." I was one of those. At least, the Conservative Party said, "No, we don't agree with that. We have to wait until the budget is balanced before we'll consider it." That was a tough position to take, but our friend from West Lincoln took that stance, and you knew where he stood. Similarly, I must say, on the West Lincoln hospital, during one budget interview that they had, the press asked him, "Would you then say that we must spend money on the West Lincoln hospital?" He conceded that, to be consistent, he couldn't do that. He was in favour of it, let me say that, and he worked for it, but there was the consistency.

What we've got now is somebody who has parachuted in from Ottawa and who was part of a government that, in fact, was all fiscal conservatism, with the odd exception. You've noticed what has come with that, because you remember the very toxic tenor of debate in the House of Commons. People talked about the hyper-partisanship that was in the House of Commons. It really hadn't permeated here very much. Well, you see that permeated here now—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: My friend from Belleville was a very moderate person in those days when Mr. Hudak was the leader. Now we see this hyper-partisanship coming in to Ontario.

I thought Michael Warren best captured that in a column that he wrote in the Toronto Star on March 21, 2016. I'll quote selectively from it because I don't have the time to read the whole column. One of the items says:

"Even his staunchest supporters admit Brown is enigmatic. More than that, he's shown a willingness to compromise long-held ideas, if that's what it takes to advance his political career."

"In the space of a couple of years, he has swung from a strident, social conservative to a Liberal-lite leader with unnerving ease. Is Brown simply trying to redefine himself? Or, is he a political chameleon who's willing to advance almost any policy to gain power?"

Then he goes on to say, "One Tory, who has known Brown for years, summed him up this way: 'You never really know what he stands for or what he's up to. I can't decide yet if that's clever-smart or if it's cunning and'"—I can't say the other word because it's unparliamentary, but it's a word that we couldn't use in this House. In respect for this House, I won't quote it.

At the end comes this conclusion about his changes in thought since he was a member of the Harper government:

"These are welcome changes. But they lack authenticity. Brown leaves the impression he's just road-testing his latest attempt to reposition himself and his party.

"He says he's a political pragmatist. But in reality, he's more an empty vessel willing to play the role of right-wing zealot in Ottawa and social liberal at Queen's Park. I can't think of a past PC Premier who's won with that strategy."

Even Mike Harris—and heaven knows that when I was on the other side, I was critical of many of the things that Mike Harris did, but you knew where he stood. We have an opposition resolution this afternoon that is all over the map.

1710

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: As I say, one part of it says—and I know the member for Belleville will be concerned about this, the Yankee fan will be concerned about this, but on one hand, he says, "Spend, spend, spend. Let's have our members get up and ask spending questions." That's legitimate for the NDP, because the NDP don't care about the deficit; they care about investments and various things in Ontario. Now, their former Liberal—sorry, a Freudian slip there. Their small-c conservative leader, Mr. Mulcair, said he was against deficits in the federal election. Even the present leader—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No, you're neutral when you're in the chair. The leader of the New Democratic Party was even sounding as though she was quite cautious and conservative in the last campaign about deficit. She had \$600 million worth of undefined cuts that were going to happen. But at least they're consistent now. They say, "Spend more money," and they want money spent on all these things. Heaven knows where that money is going to come from, but they're consistent. They are—

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, I'm sorry. It will be, "This one corporate tax increase will pay for everything in the province"; I know that. Anyway, I'm not here to pick on the NDP, because it's not their resolution, and I enjoyed parts of the speech of the previous member.

I was reading the New Yorker, and a good column that describes what's happening today. I was going to see if the other member was here. It really reminds me of the Conservative resolution this afternoon. It's by James Surowiecki, and it says:

"In 1980, the third-party presidential candidate John Anderson succinctly summed up Ronald Reagan's promise to simultaneously cut taxes, increase defense spending, keep government services intact, and balance the budget: 'Reagan's budget is constructed with mirrors.' Sure enough, Reagan presided over eight years of deficits that tripled the national debt. Yet the Republican faith that you can tax-cut your way to deficit reduction has never dimmed. This year's Republican race is dominated by candidates whose budgetary plans make Reagan's look downright reasonable.

"Not surprisingly, the most extreme plan is Donald Trump's. He would slash taxes across the board, reducing revenues by nine and a half trillion dollars over the next decade, according to estimates by the non-partisan Tax Policy Center. Yet he has also promised to balance the budget, protect social security and medicare, and not cut services. How? Well, he says he'll get rid of 'waste and fraud and abuse,' and abolish the Department of Education and the Environmental Protection Agency. And he thinks that the tax cuts would spur an economic boom, so that revenues will actually increase."

Does that sound familiar to members of the House? Have you read the resolution this afternoon? That's what it sounds like.

The article goes on to say: "This is pure fantasy. Those spending cuts would save just a tiny fraction of what he claims, and the revenue projections have no basis in reality. Yet, unrealistic as Trump's ideas are, they differ from those of his chief opponents only in degree, not in kind. Marco Rubio wants to couple a \$6.8-trillion tax cut with significant increases in defense spending, while Ted Cruz has proposed an \$8.6-trillion tax cut with—guess what?—significant increases in defense spending" at the same time. So Ted Cruz has said that. "Naturally, Rubio and Cruz have been vague about where they'd find the necessary trillions in cuts, and about how what the government does would be affected." Does that sound familiar again? It does to me. "This is par for the course. Paul Ryan's infamous budget of 2012 would have effectively eliminated ... all the federal government's non-defense discretionary spending, even as he insisted that he wanted to 'strengthen' the social safety net and keep the government investing in infrastructure.

"The candidates are engaged in a familiar dance. Voters always say that they're worried about the deficit, but, as Brendan Nyhan, an assistant professor of government at Dartmouth, put it" to this writer, "they're skittish when cuts are specified: 'They may have a symbolic preference for cutting spending, but that's different from their actual preference for spending on programs they like.'"

This article goes on, and it just describes what the new leader is all about. I suspect that's why—somebody over there will correct me—28 members of the caucus supported the former member, now known as Christine Elliott, who was appointed by this government, by the way, as the patient advocate and is a very good person, but the others did not.

I don't want to get into this subject because it's not on today's topic. But when I was going down the list of contributors to the leadership campaign of the Conservative leader, I couldn't find, I think, maybe one or two members of the government caucus itself who made a contribution. I think most of those members, when they were elected, were consistent Conservatives. They didn't believe that somehow you could spend like Santa and save like Scrooge. They believed, instead, that this was a total contradiction. I know that when my cabinet col-

league Mr. Mauro has a chance to speak, he will elaborate on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate your acknowledgement today. I notice that our galleries are not very full today. I know we have the mother of one of our pages here today, but I also wanted to make special recognition of someone who has taken the time to sit in the members' east gallery. It's Jaclyn Wight. She's an accounting student at Centennial College, which is in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood. This is her first time in the Legislature, so please welcome her.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's not normally a point of order, but we'll let it go.

Further debate.

Mr. Lorne Coe: We've had some previous speakers talk about the past, but I want to take you to a period of the Whitby-Oshawa by-election that took place on February 11, 2016. During that by-election, residents in that riding sent a strong message, didn't they? They sent a very strong message. They called for the Liberal government to present a credible plan to balance the budget and take immediate action to pay down the debt while preserving quality education and health services. Well, Speaker, we're still waiting, aren't we?

The overriding obligation of every elected official in this assembly is to include the requirement that financial resources of the province are managed to the highest standards. We must always make certain that we strive to balance our bank account, just as we must do with our own family budgets. Living within our means is the target. The obligation also extends to the provision of services to the residents of the province, whether it's health care, education or security, but we must, as legislators, balance the needs of individuals and groups with the duty to always exercise fiscal prudence. If we don't do those things, I believe we fail the people who elected us to office.

Our job is difficult to do. Well, it's easy to do it poorly, too. That's what this Liberal government has accomplished. The annual deficit escalates, and the debt along with it. It doesn't take a high-paid economist to know that even the slightest hike in interest rates could have an extremely devastating impact on the provincial debt service burden, but there is a second significant hurdle to overcome. We must now not only strive to eliminate deficit financing, but we must also find means to pay down the bloated debt that has accumulated under the watch of the Liberal stewards.

1720

Health care in this province is being devastated as a direct consequence of the scandal, waste and mismanagement of this government. We hear it every day in our constituency offices. We simply don't have the funds

now to adequately address the needs of our aging population. We know there's an aging demographic across this province, and we see it every day. Who is now looking out for our seniors who over the years have enriched the social, cultural and civic life of Ontario communities? We have a lot more to do, and we have to be better at managing the financial resources entrusted to us by the taxpayers.

I support the call to have the Liberal government present a truly credible plan to balance the budget, to create a sound debt reduction plan and to provide a strategy to preserve quality education and health services for the province. Speaker, what's clear is that life continues to be harder under this Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm certainly pleased to rise on the PC opposition day motion, so I'll start. Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise and speak on this motion today. It covers quite a bit of ground, so I'll talk on just a few of the topics, some of which I believe are the most important topics in the province today.

I don't think anyone in this chamber disagrees that we have to be smart with taxpayers' dollars and that we have to work on a plan to bring the province's finances into line. Where we disagree is about how we go about doing that.

Mr. Speaker, you don't need polling to know that this fire sale of Hydro One is a problem in the province of Ontario, though polls have shown that 81% of Ontarians oppose the sell-off; you just need to get out and talk to people.

Take Legion Branch 74 in Fort Erie, for example. Every Friday, they do a fish fry. It's not a political event; it's just a good community event to bring people together and raise a few bucks for our veterans in the community. Yet when I go there, we have seniors who can't afford their hydro bill. They're coming to me and telling me about choosing between paying for their prescription drugs and medication or paying their hydro bill. Does that honestly sound like something that should happen in a province as rich as Ontario?

Or how about the GM plant, where my brothers and sisters are represented there by Unifor? Their plant manager is Carolyn Watts. This is a company that employs thousands of people in our province, and they actually want to invest more. But when they are looking at investing, they can't be sure what their hydro rates are going to be. They're not sure if they can invest.

Carolyn Watts found me at the United Way Awards Night, when General Motors employees, the CAW and Unifor employees donated over \$400,000 to the United Way in that community. She was very clear. Year over year—we're not talking 10 years; we're talking year over year. She said to me, "Gatesy, we have to get hydro rates under control." It went up 20% to the General Motors Glendale facility in Niagara.

During the economic crisis, the Conservatives were very clear about the auto sector: 14,000 jobs—a 33% reduction—and no benefits. This is what would happen.

If you would have listened to the Conservatives during the auto crisis, they were clear: They don't pick winners and losers. What they picked was, they said, "Let the auto industry die." Can you imagine today what it would be like in the province of Ontario—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We didn't say that.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, you did. You've got a new member from Oshawa and he knows it's accurate. They're very clear on that. They said, "Let the auto industry die. We don't pick winners and losers." That's absolutely what it was. I was at the bargaining table when it was happening. You said it very clearly.

So I can understand that if hydro rates have gone up 20% in the last year, I wouldn't be sure about investing in the province either. Think about it—year after year after year. We've got to make better choices.

Mr. Speaker, I've been lucky enough to hear directly from the member who put this motion forward.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I think you're going to vote against this.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It would be interesting if they'd just listen.

When I ran in my by-election—I want to be clear about this. I ran in my by-election in the Niagara Falls riding over two years ago. They were happy to go door to door. A lot of those members over there went door to door. And why did they go door to door? I get it: They wanted to get me defeated—I understand that—and talk to the residents.

In my community, we have some of the highest unemployment in the province. We've got some of the most talented and hard-working electricians and trades in the province. I know them well. They're good local workers, yet they can't find work because there are no infrastructure projects being given to local workers. So how do we fix that? We looked at something like the GO train that my colleague on the other side talked about, all the way to Niagara Falls. What would that do for my community? That's important. We know this is an opportunity to create 2,400 full-time jobs in the riding. We also know it will create 1,200 new construction jobs in Niagara. These are huge numbers that would put people back to work by just bringing the train all the way to Niagara Falls.

Listen to this—I know it's hard sometimes to do that. That doesn't say anything about retraining our young people or giving young families an affordable place to live. So when the Conservatives came to my riding, including the MPP—I thought he was here; he was here earlier—from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, do you know how they wanted to balance the budget?

Hon. James J. Bradley: How?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Anybody? Tell me. You're over here. I'll tell you what: They were going to—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Cut 100,000 jobs?

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, that's down a few extra lines.

They were going to say no to GO. Think about that. When I was at debate—not once, not twice in four months—they said no to GO. That would have cost us the number of jobs we're talking about.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, they said no to GO.

The Conservative candidate—many, if not every single—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want you to hear this because I'm not hiding here; I'm telling you exactly. The Conservative candidate, and many, if not every PC MPP in this chamber, went door to door, and they wanted nothing to do with an investment that would create jobs. Do you know what they wanted to do instead? They said we couldn't do GO in Niagara until we balanced the budget. So what they wanted to do was fire 100,000 people across the province of Ontario just to give you—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: This is important. I wish you'd listen, really, because this is important to me.

Do you know what that would have meant? To give you an idea what that means in Niagara, that's almost the entire population of my riding that would have been out of work.

That's not all they wanted to do. At the same time, they were promising to lay off the equivalent in my riding—their candidate in Niagara Falls chose, after what we heard yesterday, to attack my firefighters. The candidate called the brave men and women who work so hard in the fire department and went after their collective agreement, went after their arbitration process—clearly a terrible thing; a front-page story, by the way, in the local paper. So there you have it: The PC Party planned to fire 100,000 people and attack my first responders, who, by the way—I want to be clear. I've said it before in this House. Those same first responders saved my wife's life when she was hit by a drunk driver on Lundy's Lane—those same firefighters that you attacked.

Mr. Speaker, we have some of the lowest corporate taxes in North America—think about this—lower even than Alabama, where they have raced to the bottom for years. Huge corporations are making massive profits while the average working man and woman in Niagara is struggling to get by. All we have to do is look at Panama. There's a lot of money out there; it's just not getting to our communities; it's not getting to our province; it's not getting to our country. That's how we were built as a country. Taxes getting cut—payouts being handed out to people at the top. The CEOs are making a lot, yet all the jobs we have been promised just aren't coming.

1730

So the communities got together and they said, "We need a plan to create jobs and bring development here, if the province isn't going to do it." A grassroots campaign—and this is important—came up with bringing GO to Niagara. Now, they've made sure that they have the local politicians onside and they've presented a comprehensive business case.

Frankly, when I first ran against the Liberals, they weren't really interested in either of those. But when I ran in the general election, the Liberals were on board. But the important part about coming on board was that every single politician worked together. It didn't matter whether you're a Conservative or a Liberal or an NDP; it didn't matter if you're a regional councillor or a city councillor. They said, "We need this in Niagara. It's the most important thing we can do to make sure our young people have jobs." So we came together and we put a business case together. What we need now is—there's only one line in the budget—a timeline and the funding to come through for GO.

This motion does talk about something that I absolutely agree with: addressing the mismanagement and waste created by the government. We believe we're in this situation because of a series of bad decisions that have been made.

I only have three minutes left, but let's look at the private-public partnerships, or the P3s, as an example. This isn't Wayne Gates saying this, by the way. The Auditor General proved that this province—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is Wayne Gates. You're Wayne Gates. Don't you try to fool me. You're Wayne Gate. I know you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, but somebody else said it—overpaid \$8.2 billion because it chose to use P3s. In my riding of Niagara Falls, we've been working on getting a hospital built; the same hospital this government came to unveil during my by-election, by the way, two years ago. But when we do get it built, I urge this government to make sure it's publicly funded.

I'm going to give you an example of that, because not everybody agrees with me. The member from St. Catharines has a brand new hospital in St. Catharines. I think that it has been open for four years now. But here's what happened with that hospital. They spent \$1 billion on that hospital. They closed two other hospitals in my riding—and, actually, they closed Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, which ended up being four. But here's what happened when they built it with a P3. Do you know how much it costs to build a 365-bed hospital in St. Catharines? It was \$1 billion under a P3 model. For almost the exact same numbers in Peterborough, they got a hospital that was built with publicly—

Hon. Jeff Leal: A great hospital.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, and the minister would know about this. They built a publicly funded—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, I was there.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Please listen on this side. They built a publicly funded, publicly delivered hospital with 335 beds. It was \$1 billion for St. Catharines. In Peterborough, do you know what it cost, Minister? Tell me.

Hon. Jeff Leal: We have the economy model in Peterborough.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It was \$335 million—\$600 million cheaper than a P3. The point that I'm trying to make there is that we could have taken that \$700 million that was spent on a P3 hospital in St. Catharines and invested that right back into frontline nurses. We might not have to lay off nurses; we might not have to close as many hospitals. So instead of doing the P3 model, we should seriously look at doing it differently. That's what I think we should be doing.

I have 48 seconds. Mr. Speaker, I want to give a real talk about the hospital in Niagara Falls. Let's get it done, let's get it built, but equally importantly, let's get it built with local engineers, local tradespeople, local businesses and local workers, I guess, but more importantly, local businesses that would supply that. Do you know what that's going to do for Niagara Falls? It's going put our skilled trades back to work instead of working in Ottawa or being laid off. The businesses that are struggling to make ends meet are going to have a project that's going take three to four years. They're going to be able to have employment for their employees, too. It's going to make sure that people have health care in the Niagara region.

Thank you very much for giving me a few minutes of your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: For those of you who have just tuned in at home, I just want to remind everybody that we are here discussing an opposition day motion put forward by the PC caucus. Basically, we're talking today about the nine consecutive budgets that this Liberal government has put forward with huge deficits, the fact that we're now carrying over \$300 billion in debt here in Ontario, the fact that we are paying close to \$2 billion a year to pay off just the interest on the debt—and we're not even paying down anything on the debt. That is with very low interest rates, I want to remind everybody. What is going to happen to Ontario when those interest rates inevitably rise?

We're hearing from a lot of people today who all expressed concern on Ontario's plans for the future, including the government. What I would say is what we haven't heard very much about today is setting priorities. It doesn't take a person with a university degree, or even a high school degree, to understand that you have to set priorities. What we're seeing from this government is a lack of understanding that, with the over \$100 billion they collect in revenue every year, they are still unable to pay the bills on what Ontarians feel are priorities, which are health care, special-needs funding, seniors and education.

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think that if the member opposite had something to say—he's shouting out things right now—there was still time left on the clock for his

party. I'm wondering why he didn't rise and speak to everybody at home if he had something very important to share with everyone.

What I would say is we need to not just prioritize, but understand what has been going on with this Liberal government. What we were seeing in the last week in the newspapers is that it's not just the average workers who go home and pay their taxes who are questioning; people who write for a living and write about politics, specifically about Ontario politics, are questioning this government's motives and wondering at how their decision-making gets done. They are questioning whether contracts are being assigned, whether hospitals are getting built, whether transit is getting built based on their supporters, who support them monetarily for the Liberal fund—

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I would say again to the minister, just as I said to the member sitting beside you: If you have something that you wish to share with the people here in the Legislature or our constituents back home, please rise and share it with them. We would all be very interested in hearing what you have to say.

The fact remains that it is suspicious. People who have a lot of experience, decades of experience in watching all levels of government, feel that it is suspicious, and they—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Speaker, come on. Are you listening to what's going on over there?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. I'm going to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to come to order. I don't appreciate the shout-outs to the Chair, and as a result—no?

Hon. Jeff Leal: No, no, I'd appreciate you listening to what's going on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Well, thank you very much. You're warned. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is warned.

Continue, please.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much.

It's my understanding that we're speaking today about an opposition motion that raises concerns about the level of debt in Ontario and the fact that we're paying close to \$12 billion a year just in interest payments to service that debt. I am trying to address what can be done to ensure that the money collected, the over \$100 billion of revenue collected by the province of Ontario, goes to what everybody in Ontario feels is a priority.

I think that all the members here have their own sets of what they feel are priorities on where that money should go. They were elected to represent the people of Ontario in ensuring that the money goes where the people of Ontario feel it is a priority—not just what we might personally believe, not just what somebody who donates to any of the parties here today or their riding associations believes, but what the people of Ontario, who pay their taxes at all levels of taxation, feel is a priority.

When we hear of nurses being let go, when we hear of special education programs being cut, when we hear of

seniors' services being slashed, we all know—it doesn't matter what party we're in—that those priorities are not being met.

1740

I was visited today by somebody who was recently refused for a Trillium grant that her organization had already received from 2013 to 2015. It was a two-year grant. Her organization received \$120,000 to operate Cinéfranco, which is recognized around the world—award-winning francophone cinema projects. Her name is Marcelle Lean. She is very disappointed. She actually paid a visit to members opposite, including the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. She said how disappointed she was, and she wanted an explanation, just this last week or so. What she was told was, “Well, we spent a lot of money celebrating Samuel de Champlain, the 400th anniversary, and perhaps you could have tied in and done some funding for that.”

She said to me, “Gila, we do not have any French films on Samuel de Champlain. Perhaps we could have recognized that, for Samuel de Champlain, it was about francophones, and we could have somehow tied it in more broadly with franco-cinema.”

She feels that the money that was spent on Pan Am—she brought it up to me that she started doing the research on where the money is going.

This is the problem, Mr. Speaker. Until your organization doesn't receive funding; until you go to an emergency room with your ailing parent or child or spouse, and you're left waiting in the waiting room, or you see people in the halls; until you see cuts to the special education schools; until it happens to you, it's hard to really feel the brunt of the punishing cuts that we're seeing. I don't see how it can end unless we prioritize, Mr. Speaker.

The selling of Hydro One: For comparison, picture a family in my riding of Thornhill who own a Tim Hortons franchise. The Tim Hortons franchise is earning the family—perhaps they're getting \$70,000 or \$100,000 a year from the Tim Hortons franchise. Are they going to sell their Tim Hortons franchise so that they can go on a trip around the world and go on a vacation? Are they going to sell the Tim Hortons franchise to renovate their house for that year? They're not, because they recognize that the next year, they have no funding left. How are they going to survive?

Hydro One is a revenue generator for this province, and we are selling it to pay down the debt. This government likes to say that they're investing in infrastructure somehow, but we all know that it is just to pay down the debt and make their books look a little bit better. What are we going to do when we do not have the revenue from Hydro One once it's sold? We're going to be in far worse shape than we are right now.

I just want to wrap up by saying—it's an expression we hear often, but it's absolutely so true, and it really does apply to this opposition day motion. In order to be socially compassionate, we must be fiscally responsible. That is absolutely the truth, Mr. Speaker. We want, on this side of the House, to ensure that what everyone in

Ontario believes is a priority has the funding that it needs. In order to do that, we must address the fact that we have a debt that is completely out of control.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources for ceding me his time.

I really didn't want to become involved in this debate, because after I read the motion and I listened to the debate, especially coming from the opposition, I was trying to find a word to really symbolize the motion. The word I came up with, Mr. Speaker, is "horse feathers"—horse feathers. In this—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: No, it's horse feathers. Look it up. Google it. Look it up.

We all know in this place that you have to make choices. You can't choose everything. What the Leader of the Opposition has done is say, "I choose everything. I can do everything." It's not possible.

The deputy House leader put it very clearly. When the former leader said, "You know what? I'm ready to say goodbye to all those auto families. We're not going to support them," okay, that's a decision. The member from Windsor West made it very clear that that was a choice that was made. You cannot choose everything, okay? You can't say, "Pay down the deficit, reduce our taxes, and do you know what? Build this hospital in my riding." It doesn't work that way. He needs to pick a lane. They talk about a plan. We have a plan to balance the budget. So in this time when we need a plan, what does the Leader of the Opposition give us? Horse feathers. That's what we're getting.

Remember Bill Davis?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Okay, I've put up with quite a lot. I've been extremely lenient today, but the axe is coming down soon. Cut it back, please.

Continue.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to reiterate again that at this time, when we have a clear path to balancing the budget and investing in people's priorities, the Leader of the Opposition—what is his plan? Horse feathers. There is no plan. There's, "I can do all of these things. I can be all things to all people." It is not possible.

Bill Davis, 1971 to 1984: He didn't pay down the debt. He ran a deficit all the way through there, because he understood that you cannot cut those things that families depend on. There's a ledger sheet that we have here, and it's an important ledger sheet, but there are also 13 million ledger sheets out there in Ontario, and they are people's personal lives. I hear it from the members of the

opposition on both sides when they stand up and speak about people in their ridings, as we all do in here. There are ledger sheets there.

So when you fire 100,000 people or you don't support the auto industry or you say, "Cut taxes," or you say, "Cut this," then you're going to affect people's lives. The danger with that is—this is important. The danger with that is that we don't see all of that. We see that ledger sheet here, but we don't see people's individual lives when we do things like that. That's what the danger is.

I know that members on all sides of this House care about the people that they represent and want the best for them and want them to have services. But don't tell them you can do everything for them, because it's not possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We've heard a lot of debate on our opposition day motion, and do you know what? I've been fortunate to be here since 2011. I've yet to see a balanced budget. It will probably be a long time—he talks about horse feathers. It will probably be a long time before pigs can fly, before this happens.

But do you know what? We take a look at deficits and we see that the actual debt load has increased now to well over \$300 billion.

I have businesses—I have people coming into my office back in the great riding of Chatham-Kent, and they're in tears because they cannot pay their hydro bills. I look at it and I say: Why is that?

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: No, you should listen to that. Why is that? It's because of the mismanagement of this government, the way they've handled their energy plans. You've got wind turbines; you've got everything else all over the place, raising up hydro rates, and people can't pay their bills. You also have companies leaving the country, leaving the province, and that has to stop. You've got to get your act in order.

We had a former member from Newmarket-Aurora, Frank Klees, an amazing MPP. Frank Klees brought up and exposed this government's mismanagement as it pertained to Ornge air and the scandals that were going on with regard to that. That was under the now President of the Treasury Board, the now Deputy Premier, when she was, in fact, the Minister of Health. She allowed that mismanagement to continue on. We talk about scandals, we talk about mismanagement, and when we take a look at what this government is doing, Speaker, it's got to stop.

We listened to the honourable member from St. Catharines. I want to read something here. It's from the *Toronto Sun*:

"Ontario Liberals Operate in the Dark.

"The Kathleen Wynne/Dalton McGuinty ... government didn't completely mess up Ontario's electricity system by mere accident." Oh, no, no.

"It took years of ignoring advice from its own experts...."

And then “energy consultant Tom Adams and University of Guelph economist Ross McKittrick noted in a report for the Fraser Institute that the Liberal government was unable to produce any convincing evidence to back its claim of saving taxpayers and ratepayers \$2 in energy costs for every \$1 it invests in conservation.

“All three studies reached the same conclusion—by failing in their due diligence, the Liberals wasted billions of public dollars.

“Something Ontarians”—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. Are we all ready? Good.

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 2. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Brown, Patrick	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill
Anderson, Granville	Fife, Catherine	McGarry, Kathryn
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted
Ballard, Chris	French, Jennifer K.	Meilleur, Madeleine
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gates, Wayne	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Campbell, Sarah	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Chan, Michael	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzie	Oraziotti, David
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Coteau, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Crack, Grant	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 24; the nays are 57.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder / *Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail et la Loi sur le ministère du Travail relativement à l'état de stress post-traumatique.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1805.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Park Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

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COMITÉ PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yvan Baker
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Peter Z. Milczyn
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Lisa Gretzky, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Jim McDonell
Eleanor McMahon, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Wayne Gates
Monte Kwinter, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Chris Ballard, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Correction of record

Mr. Chris Ballard 8407

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi 8407

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Cancer care

Mr. Jeff Yurek 8408
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac) 8408

Autism treatment

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky 8408

Refugees

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri 8408

Human trafficking

Ms. Laurie Scott 8408

Jim Freeman

Ms. Jennifer K. French 8409

Water fluoridation

Mr. Bob Delaney 8409

Ontario Scottish community

Mr. Bill Walker 8409

Hospice of Windsor and Essex County

Ms. Eleanor McMahon 8410

Focus for Ethnic Women

Ms. Daiene Vernile 8410

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

790186 Ontario Inc. Act, 2016, Bill Pr42,

Mme Gélinas

First reading agreed to 8410

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Food and beverage industry

Hon. Jeff Leal 8410

National Volunteer Week

Hon. Michael Chan 8411

Food and beverage industry

Mr. Toby Barrett 8412

National Volunteer Week

Ms. Sylvia Jones 8412

National Volunteer Week

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 8413

Food and beverage industry

Mr. John Vanthof 8413

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Special-needs students

Mr. Jim McDonnell 8413

Services for the developmentally disabled

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky 8414

Water fluoridation

Mr. Bob Delaney 8414

Health care funding

Mr. Lorne Coe 8414

Autism treatment

Ms. Peggy Sattler 8414

GO Transit

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry 8415

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Ms. Sylvia Jones 8415

Health care funding

Mme France Gélinas 8415

Water fluoridation

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry 8416

Dog ownership

Mr. Rick Nicholls 8416

Mental health and addiction services

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 8416

Home inspection industry

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry 8416

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Government policies

Mr. Patrick Brown 8417

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 8418

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris 8419

Mr. Bill Walker 8420

Ms. Peggy Sattler 8421

Hon. Steven Del Duca 8422

Mr. Michael Harris 8424

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky 8425

Hon. James J. Bradley 8427

Mr. Lorne Coe 8429

Mr. Wayne Gates 8429

Mrs. Gila Martow 8431

Mr. John Fraser 8433

Mr. Rick Nicholls 8433

Motion negatived 8434

Royal assent / Sanction royale

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller) 8434

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 6 April 2016 / Mercredi 6 avril 2016

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, 2016, Bill 178, Ms. Damerla / Loi de 2016 modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée, projet de loi 178, Mme Damerla

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8387
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	8387
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	8387
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8388
Mme France Gélinas	8388
Mr. John Fraser	8388
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8389
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8390
Mr. Jim McDonell	8391
Miss Monique Taylor	8391
Hon. Michael Coteau	8391
Mr. John Yakabuski	8392
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8392
Mr. Randy Hillier	8392
Mr. Taras Natyshak	8394
Hon. James J. Bradley	8395
Mr. John Yakabuski	8395
Mr. Peter Tabuns	8395
Mr. Randy Hillier	8396
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	8396

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	8396
Hon. Reza Moridi	8396
Mme Gila Martow	8396
Hon. Jeff Leal	8396
Mr. Yvan Baker	8397
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8397
Mr. Todd Smith	8397
Mr. Monte McNaughton	8397
Mr. Yvan Baker	8397
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8397
Mr. John Vanthof	8397

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Fundraising

Mr. Patrick Brown	8397
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8397

Hon. Deborah Matthews	8398
-----------------------------	------

Fundraising

Mr. Patrick Brown	8398
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8398
Hon. Brad Duguid	8399

Fundraising

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	8399
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8399
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8400

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	8400
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8400

Fundraising

Mr. Todd Smith	8401
Hon. Brad Duguid	8401

Fundraising

Ms. Catherine Fife	8402
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8402
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8402

Invasive species

Ms. Sophie Kiwala	8402
Hon. Bill Mauro	8403

Concussions

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	8403
Hon. Michael Coteau	8403
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8404

Fundraising

Mr. Peter Tabuns	8404
Hon. Brad Duguid	8404

Seniors' health services

Mrs. Cristina Martins	8404
Hon. Mario Sergio	8405

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Mr. Steve Clark	8405
Hon. Michael Coteau	8405

Minimum wage

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	8406
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8406

First responders

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	8406
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8407

Visitors

Hon. Bill Mauro	8407
Mr. Yvan Baker	8407

Continued on inside back cover

No. 157



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First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 7 April 2016



Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 7 avril 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 April 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 avril 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning.
Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S TRAILS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE SOUTIEN AUX SENTIERS DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 4, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur les sentiers de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I am pleased to rise today and speak about the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. Bear with me: This is one hour of Paul Miller. I hope you can handle it.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's the Paul Miller show.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's Paul Miller Live. One is already leaving.

Before I start, I'd like to welcome the new Deputy Speaker, Soo Wong.

Applause.

Mr. Paul Miller: I wish you all—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's on the side, Soo.

Mr. Steve Clark: A point of order, Madam Chair.

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, thanks, Stevie.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. You're starting already.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I just wanted to offer our congratulations to you as well. I'm glad that the member extended his thanks to you. We're all very pleased to see you in the chair.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you very much.

Mr. Paul Miller: And good luck, Soo. Bless you.

The history of the bill: This bill has been incubating for a very, very long time—well before the last general election. I recall, Speaker, that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport began work on two trails-related projects in the fall of 2013.

First, they began talking about the Pan Am and Parapan trails, which were supposed to be completed in time for the Pan Am Games in the summer of 2015. The idea behind these was to close some of the many gaps in Ontario's Trans Canada Trail—about 250 kilometres in total. Once complete, we would have a continuous trail stretching over 2,000 kilometres.

Second, they commenced consultations on a new Ontario Trails Strategy. I'm pleased to see that the ministry did reach out to consult with many interested parties and stakeholders, including aboriginal groups. The problem is that, nevertheless, the consultation and communication has not been as extensive as it needed to be.

A new trails strategy is something we have needed in this province for a very long time. Also, we need the value of our trails as common public recreational spaces where we can absorb the natural world. The definition of trails includes hiking trails, pathways, snowmobile routes and more. There are 2,500 trails in Ontario, stretching over 80,000 kilometres. You have to walk around the entire world twice to reach that distance.

Trails are not just for recreational use. In northern Ontario, people often rely on trails in the absence of passable roads or highways. We cannot neglect that, and this is one of the reasons this bill is so important to the north.

This is an omnibus bill, as it establishes one new act and includes five additional schedules that amend five other acts: the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act, the Occupiers' Liability Act, the Off-Road Vehicles Act, the Public Lands Act and the Trespass to Property Act.

My colleagues will know that I've never been a warm friend of omnibus bills. Having said that, this omnibus bill's objectives are coherent and consistent.

The former Speaker of the House of Commons, John Allen Fraser, ruled in favour of the definition of acceptable omnibus bills as follows: "The essential defence of an omnibus procedure is that the bill in question, although it may seem to create or to amend many disparate statutes, in effect has one basic principle or purpose which ties together all the proposed enactments and thereby renders the bill intelligible for parliamentary purposes."

The schedules of this bill do indeed have one basic purpose: "To protect and improve thousands of kilometres of the province's urban, suburban, rural and remote land and water trails network while encouraging its expansion." To this end, this bill aims to "improve, sustain and encourage the expansion of trails by addressing liability, trespassing and crown land issues."

The purpose of this bill is reasonable, Speaker. You would find few members in this House in opposition to this bill's objective. The question is of the bill's efficiency and effectiveness. Being effective is about doing the right things, while being efficient is also about doing things.

Does this bill do things right? In general I would say a qualified yes, but consultation and engagement in the communities that will be impacted by the legislation has not been extensive enough. This has created some major problems in northern and rural Ontario, most especially around the closure of some long-standing snowmobile trails this past winter.

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport said this past Monday that there had been extensive consultations, and gave some brief hints at that, including a mention of five regional sessions. For legislation that could have such a profound and specific impact on northern and rural Ontario, it simply isn't enough.

Our province is enormous, with a total area of over one million square kilometres. If Ontario went on its own as a fully sovereign state, it would be the 28th largest in the world. We're bigger than Egypt, Nigeria and Pakistan. In fact, Ontario is more than twice the size of Thailand or Spain—really incredible.

That really should put in perspective how utterly inadequate five regional consultations are for a bill that has its major impacts in rural Ontario. I can't imagine the people of rural Spain being happy with one consultation session on the northern coast, another on the southern coast, and maybe, if they win the flip of a coin, one more in the western mountains. It's not enough, Speaker, when you consider the size of this province and the distances involved.

I will say that I'd be very interested in seeing the complete list of consultations, as it would give an indication of where this outreach needs to go next, and would help us demonstrate to our constituents that the consultations on this bill have been in good faith and not just limited to the usual stakeholders in the Toronto bubble. It is very important that people affected by this bill feel included in the process, because without that confidence this legislation will do more harm than good. I hope that the government will come forward and share that information with the opposition critics when the time comes.

I'm encouraged to see that the legislation has been framed such that consultation is not a one-time affair. Subsequent to passage of the bill, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry will consult on a regulation defining damage to crown land and property. There will be consultations by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a process for recognizing Ontario's trails of distinction, on a voluntary classification system, on voluntary best practices and on establishing trails-related targets. On a recurring basis, the ministry will consult on the periodic review of the Ontario Trails Strategy.

This bill does have many right things with it, but some we have to look at. It promotes access and awareness of

Ontario trails by making it easier for people to understand the trails available here, to understand their nature and their difficulty and by recognizing high-quality trails as trails of distinction. This is all very important, Speaker, because as of now, there is no coherent system province-wide to classify trails. Casual hikers, cyclists or ATV users have no way of definitely knowing the difficulty of a trail.

0910

This bill aims to establish greater clarity in the relationship between landowners and trail users. It allows landowners the option of granting time-limited or permanent easements. It's just an option, but it will be very beneficial to many landowners and trail users. The creation of this possibility as a supplementary mechanism will in fact serve to protect landowners.

However, Speaker, I will return to the question of easements later in this debate, because some of the omissions from the bill on this topic, as well as one questionable proposal, combined with insufficient consultation and communication, have allowed misinformation to seep into this debate and have really poisoned the well around the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act. I want to take a lot of time to discuss this, Speaker, but I also want to talk first about some of the other aspects of this legislation.

Further to this, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act creates more clarity around liability on the trails. It establishes that a lower standard of care applies to occupiers of trail property which are not-for-profit or public sector organizations. This applies even if there is an incidental fee—only an incidental fee—related to access onto or use of the land, such as for parking, or if a public benefit or payment is given to a not-for-profit trail manager.

Another important change to the Occupiers' Liability Act is that the list of lands to which a lower standard of care applies is amended to add portages.

It is important to note that the standards of care themselves are not being revised.

This is a very important change, because there are two standards of care in the province under the Occupiers' Liability Act. The higher standard is that "an occupier of premises owes a duty to take such care as in all the circumstances of the case is reasonable to see that persons entering on the premises, and the property brought on the premises by those persons are reasonably safe while on the premises." Essentially, this standard of care requires that a property owner or occupier protect a person entering his or her property from all reasonable foreseeable hazards or circumstances.

If you are a landowner voluntarily offering access to your land to a trail organization or snowmobile club, then this is a demanding standard of care. It requires a lot of time and attention and creates a liability and risk for the landowner. It is a major deterrent to landowners permitting access to their land for recreational purposes. Who can blame them for that, Speaker, really? If they don't benefit from people crossing their land, why would they want to assume the liability? It makes sense to me.

The lower standard of care under the Occupiers' Liability Act provides that the occupier owes a duty to the person who enters onto the premises "to not create a danger with the deliberate intent of doing harm or damage to the person or his or her property and to not act with reckless disregard of the presence of the person or his or her property."

The problem is that under the current statutes, there is some uncertainty over which standards of care apply to landowners who permit access to the trail.

Subsection 4(3) of the Occupiers' Liability Act states:

"A person who enters premises described in subsection (4) shall be deemed to have willingly assumed all risks and is subject to the duty of care set out in subsection (1)"—that is, Speaker, the lower standard of care I just outlined.

"(a) where the entry is prohibited under the Trespass to Property Act;

"(b) where the occupier has posted no notice in respect of entry and has not otherwise expressly permitted entry; or

"(c) where the entry is for the purpose of a recreational activity and,

"(i) no fee is paid for the entry or activity of the person, other than a benefit or payment received from a government or government agency or a non-profit recreation club or association, and

"(ii) the person is not being provided with living accommodation by the occupier."

The uncertainty in relation to trails has risen around subclause 4(3)(c)(i). To that end, the bill we'll be considering today, the Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, proposes to amend the Occupiers' Liability Act by inserting a subsection to clarify that the following do not constitute a fee for entry or activity:

"1. A fee charged for a purpose incidental to the entry or activity, such as for parking.

"2. The receipt by a non-profit recreation club or association of a benefit or payment from or under the authority of a government or government agency."

Speaker, this is an important amendment, because it protects landowners and trail organizations that are not profiting from the trails, that are maintaining these trails or permitting access for the public benefit. I'm encouraged that this legislation removes this uncertainty in order to protect community-minded landowners, both because this is fairer and because it will encourage more landowners to permit access to trails crossing their properties.

Outside this building, I'm not sure if anyone in urban Ontario has heard of this bill, leaving aside the minister's staffers over on Bay Street and perhaps a couple of lobbyists. It's not on the major media's radar all—it will be. I give credit: There was one article in the London Free Press. But the lack of coverage is a bit of a shame, because not only does this bill affect urban and suburban residents, but our media should be covering stories of special importance to rural Ontarians. In this case, it hasn't made the major newspapers' priority list yet, but

that doesn't mean that it hasn't made it into any newspapers. I may have missed a few articles in newspapers, but I have columns and news pieces on this bill in the Cornwall Standard Freeholder, in the Bracebridge Examiner, the St. Catharines Standard, the Pembroke Daily Observer and the Manitoulin Expositor.

Some of the commentary has been well-informed. Others, unfortunately, have been influenced by the incredibly misleading statements and commentary put out by the Ontario Landowners Association. I really want to commend the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for speaking loudly and forcefully against this misinformation, because we know of his roots in this organization. The member said:

"Bill 100 does not grant any new authorities over private land, nor does it infringe or impair private property rights. It is indeed unfortunate that the OLA"—a landowners' group—"does not have people who are knowledgeable providing advice to them.

"They're suggesting that easements can be imposed on private landowners, and nothing could be further from the truth. It's not based on fact."

I couldn't agree more with the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. This misinformation has had some very detrimental effects already on people in northern and rural Ontario. We've had enough trouble with trust in government—much of it is caused by the numerous scandals surrounding the Liberal government—without people spreading patently wrong information and casting aspersions on constructive and well-intentioned legislation. We may as well close up shop and sell off the furniture here if people start believing that nothing can be done in this government or this building.

As my colleague from Nickel Belt said a couple of weeks back, the way this bill is being interpreted is very problematic and is creating great difficulties in rural Ontario, but most particularly in parts of northern Ontario.

A lot of land in the north is owned by private landowners, mainly farmers. The trails in northern Ontario are so important in winter. They are vital recreational resources for the people who live there, but they are also some of the biggest generators of winter tourism activity. The misinformation being spread has led worried landowners to cut off access to trails used for years—years—by snowmobile clubs and others. Agreements have been cancelled in Port Carling, in Athens and Gananoque.

There have been problems all over northern Ontario, in Manitoulin and Nickel Belt, among other places. What happens to tourism in northern Ontario if all the snowmobile trails, ATV trails and hiking trails start shutting down? It's not going to be good. It's going to be ugly. It will be bad for a whole lot of businesses, recreational, food service, accommodation, gas stations, not to mention all the other jobs that are supported by the spending of the people who work in these businesses. We need to protect jobs in the north. They have been hit hard already. We need to ensure that the north retains a viable tourist economy; it helps to protect the northern way of life.

This bill is well-intentioned. It is a piece of legislation that has been, if not needed, then desirable in this province for some time, to bring clarity and protection to the relationship between landowners and trail users and to expand the number of trails available in Ontario. It is something that I think needs some amendment at committee and certainly some very wide consultation, but it should be supported in getting there in this second reading at least. The NDP supports the objectives of the bill because we want to see trails improved, maintained and expanded. By addressing liability, trespassing and crown use issues, the legislation is targeting important areas to achieve those goals. It is good that this bill provides the trails community with improved and expanded tools to develop, operate and promote trails.

0920

It is important to remove barriers in order to connect and expand trails across this province. It is of great benefit to trail users and local tourism that this bill enables the recognition of trails of distinction and, for the benefit of local communities, the creation of a voluntary classification system and voluntary best practices. A classification system will also help users to find trails that match their interests and ability.

The misinformation that has been spread about this bill has created fear, Speaker—fear. It has had some very negative knock-on effects for northern Ontario that need to be arrested now, but only the government has the ability to do this.

I would like to see the bill move through the legislative process, but what I would like to see most of all is for the ministry to reach out to the public, explain what the bill is really about and talk to the people impacted one to one about their concerns, because trust in the government is probably at an all-time low, I'm sorry to say.

If people start hearing that the government is effectively going to take the land, they get very anxious. They get scared—quite rightly, too; wouldn't you? The government is not taking anyone's land with this bill. There is an option in here for the landowner to grant easements—an option only, Speaker; not a law, just an option.

There is a very long list of bodies eligible to have easements assigned to them. The bill sets out an eligible body as:

“(a) the crown in right of Canada or in right of Ontario,

“(b) an agency, board or commission of the crown in right of Canada or in right of Ontario that has the power to hold an interest in land,

“(c) a band within the meaning of the Indian Act (Canada),

“(d) an aboriginal community or organization prescribed by the regulations made under this act,

“(e) a municipality within the meaning of the Municipal Act, 2001,

“(f) a conservation authority established under the Conservation Authorities Act,

“(g) a board within the meaning of the Education Act,

“(h) a corporation incorporated under part III of the Corporations Act or part II of the Canada Corporations Act that is a charity registered under the Income Tax Act (Canada),

“(i) a trustee of a charitable foundation that is a charity registered under the Income Tax Act (Canada),

“(j) a prescribed donee under the Income Tax Act (Canada),

“(k) a qualified organization, as defined under section 170(h) of the Internal Revenue Code (United States) and Treasury Reg 1.170A-14 (United States),

“(l) a corporation created by statute that is a registered charity under the Income Tax Act (Canada),

“(m) any other person or body prescribed by the regulations made under this Act....”

This list demonstrates that the easements need not be granted to the government. The list of eligible bodies is quite extensive and inclusive. The easements may be permanent or they may be time limited. Schedule 1, section 12, subsection 9 states:

“An easement is valid for the term specified in it. The term must be specified as a period of months, years or in perpetuity.”

That means that it's up to the landowner what he wants to do. That's good, because it allows a lot more flexibility for the landowner and for the users, but it also doesn't allow wasteful ideas such as a four-day or two-week easement hearing. The months provision is clearly intended to allow a landowner and eligible bodies to come to an arrangement covering one activity season, be it snowmobiling season or summer activity season.

So whether an easement is perpetual or term-limited is the decision of the landowner. Let me make this clear: It's up to the landowner, not these rumours that have been floating around that they're going to take somebody's land or they're going to confiscate trails. It's a load of baloney.

Time for another water break. Jeez, Speaker, only another 38 minutes. I'm flying here.

So too is the decision over whether or not to grant an easement at all. No landowner has to give any land away. No landowner will have their land forcibly taken. This bill is meant to reconcile the interests of the landowners and the trail users. It does that by providing a greater, stronger protective framework for both landowners and trail users, but that framework is of no use if people do not see it or if people don't understand it.

People have to communicate. As the member from Leeds–Grenville said earlier in the debate, the agreements reached between the trail users and landowners are very delicate.

The interpretations of these arrangements are very delicate. All of us in this House, I think, have a responsibility to stand up against the spread of incorrect interpretations that are endangering this delicate balance and these delicate agreements because, if it isn't stopped, then, trail act or no trail act, communities up north are going to suffer.

I might have a tendency to say that the member from Leeds–Grenville might be just kind of creating a bit of a buzz about the negativity of this. It's not negative.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture does not support every aspect of this bill, primarily around what they see as vague best practices for trail operators and what they believe are insufficient fines for trespassing. But they're not against it, Speaker. We know that it has been a concern of theirs for many years now and that some of the members of the PC Party have felt the same way. The member from Dufferin–Caledon introduced such a bill in the fall of 2014, I recall. Despite not agreeing with every aspect of Bill 100, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has publicly and repeatedly assured farmers that easements under this bill are “completely voluntary,” despite all the rumours that are being created by certain individuals.

I think it is important that all of us in this House reiterate and clarify, clearly and loudly, and read into the record the agreement of multiple sources. I'll repeat what the OFA has stated: “Section 12 of this legislation is clear that an owner's decision to enter into a trail easement is their own choice and is completely”—I repeat, completely—“voluntary. The legislation clearly states a landowner may grant”—may grant—“an easement to allow use of their property and have the right to state the length or term of that agreement. That means Ontario farmers and rural property owners will retain a choice and should not feel obligated to enter into any easement agreement for recreational trail use” if they're uncomfortable or they feel that they might have a liability, which they won't, but some people are going around saying that all these things are going to happen. I'm saying it for the TV audience and I'm saying it for this Legislature: It's a load of rubbish. It's not going to affect them.

To bring something concrete to this discussion—not that I want to be mistaken for a trail paver—I'd like to speak for a few minutes about some problems we've been having with trails in my community, difficulties that unfortunately this bill will do nothing to address. This is despite the problems having been caused at the provincial level.

We have a beautiful beachfront and waterfront trail in Hamilton. If you haven't been there, you really should make the effort this spring or summer to use it. The city of Hamilton and local communities invested years and years of effort and quite a number of dollars into beautifying this long trail, which runs right along the length of my riding, along the shores of Lake Ontario and on towards Grimsby.

It's not well known outside of the area, which we can safely say is true of most trails, but like most trails, it is cherished by the local community as a place to walk, cycle, jog, walk their dogs and get away from it all, right by the lake—a place to exercise; a place to relax. A few months ago, just before the holidays, Hydro One crews came in and started tearing up trees. They clear-cut the trees along the beach trail and sprayed herbicide all over

the place to make sure the trees don't come back. Great. Thanks a lot. Hydro One has left stumps of what was once a prized Hamilton attraction—beautiful trees. They cared nothing for our longest and proudest trail. There has been absolutely no accountability.

As I said, the city of Hamilton had invested years in beautifying this trail for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. The city offered to maintain the trees along the beachfront trails at its own expense, but its offer was ignored, Speaker. Hydro One knows better. They're clear-cutting. They're cutting down trees they don't even have to cut down because there's some North American act, because years ago—remember the big blackout when, I think it was, a squirrel caused a big blackout in Ohio and knocked out half of the eastern corridor? A squirrel did that on a transformer in Ohio.

Those days have changed. We've come a long way since then, but Hydro One now has to follow a North American line act where they have to clear out so many metres underneath or close to lines in case of ice storms or whatever. That's understandable. Trim them way back. Trees take five to 10 years to grow before they become a problem. You could cut them back or cut the ones that are directly under the towers—it's understandable—or the ones that may fall into the towers. I don't have a problem with that. But you don't have to cut 50 metres on either side of it. It also acts as a buffer for some highways like the Red Hill Expressway; now they don't have a buffer from the noise because all the trees have been cut down. The neighbours are in an uproar, and they've even hired a lawyer.

0930

“But we're Hydro One, so we've got to follow the law and do what we're told to do.” That's the way it is: “You're out of luck. Tough luck.” It's not good, Speaker. It's causing a lot of aggravation.

We may be talking a good game about trails in this Legislature. I think that the protection of our trails is something that members on all sides of the House can agree on. But what happens when our natural environment and people's public interest in recreational trails collide with big money, hydro and their rules? Make no mistake, Speaker, now that Hydro One has been partially privatized and now that the government has taken great pains to remove all lines of accountability, Hydro One is big money, big say and big power. It's not a public institution anymore.

Not only are prices going to go up for our hydro, but we're losing control over our environment and what surrounds the power usage and the towers. We're losing more control, because big business can hire big lawyers. It may not be too late to save if the government corrects their course, but as it stands today, Hydro One is all about the mighty dollar.

You see, Speaker, the reason why Hydro One has been slashing and burning the trails is that it's looking to save a few bucks. It's all about money. They don't want to have to come in there every three or four years and trim. They want it for every 20 years or 15 years, so they don't

have to come back. That's ridiculous. You're ruining beautiful trees and the environment, because you don't want to pay to come back and trim every five or 10 years. You don't want to do that. For the amount you're saving, the amount of pleasure that you're taking away from the public is unacceptable.

The Auditor General reported that Hydro One has been cheapening out on its vegetation management cycle, operating on a nine-and-a-half-year cycle, as I said, as opposed to the average three-to-five-year cycle of all its peers and everyone else. Instead of trimming trees selectively and responsibly, Hydro One has, under the watch of the government, allowed trees to grow wild for nine years—under the watch of this government—then razed them when a critical Auditor General report was looming.

There's no accountability, Speaker—none. Hydro One told our constituents to go to the Ontario Energy Board if they've got a problem. Good luck. The Ontario Energy Board told them that, thanks to the government, they no longer have any authority over these matters. It's up to Hydro One. Wow. So any appeal body that we had is toast. They shrugged their shoulders. They threw my constituents back on the good graces of Hydro One. How did they make out? Not too good. The Ministry of Energy has nothing to say, because they say Hydro One is no longer a public institution. So you can sing for it. Have a good song, and so on.

The circle continues, and all the while, Hydro One has been getting its red pen out to target any other trails they can find in my riding, like the one along the beautiful Red Hill Valley. Unbelievable. Unbelievable. Hydro One has not only razed the trees along the beachfront trail; it has sprayed large quantities of herbicide just a few metres from the shoreline. Isn't that wonderful? You've got kids playing down there; you've got people walking their dogs; you've got other animals—creatures of our society, our world—being affected by these herbicides. They're spraying it all over the place. I don't know.

I remember, Speaker, years ago up north, they were using—are you ready for this one? Like in the war in Vietnam, they were using Agent Orange all over the sides of highways up in northern Ontario. Are there long-term effects on people? Probably, and definitely on animals and creatures. Is there going to be a latency period for cancer? Probably. Lovely.

It's not just Hamilton, Speaker. The problem reaches far and wide. I know they've been in Guelph where they wrecked the Royal Recreational Trail, turning a tree-shaded walkway into a grassland which turns brown by July. It's not too pretty. This may or may not be something that can be incorporated into this bill, but the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport needs to get a handle on this kind of reckless destruction. Put this into our trail strategy. It might be a good idea to protect some of these beautiful God's creations. Make sure that our trails are protected from the carelessness and penny-pinching actions of both private corporations and public institutions. Demand an accounting from Hydro One of the similar clear-cutting of trails in this province.

This government needs to find a way to ensure that instead of stifling municipalities and local residents, Hydro One works in co-operation with them and uses responsible tree management practices to protect our natural heritage, amenities, as well as the integrity of our power transmission system in this province. These goals do not have to be in constant opposition. Trails are very vulnerable, fragile things.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): There's a lot of chatter in this corner. The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Paul Miller: The minister over there is talking, too.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): There's a lot of chatter here. I would respectfully ask the members on the government side to please tone down, because we have a debate going on this side. This I respectfully ask.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well done, Speaker. Maybe they want to listen about trails in their area but they seem not interested. Oh, well.

Trails are vulnerable, as I said. Trails are very long, narrow lines that thread through our entire province. All it takes is one anxious landowner to close a part of a trail to break that thread. Depending on the location, the trail could be permanently severed into two. Most likely, if one landowner is worried, others are too and they're watching very closely. Pretty soon, you'll have other landowners saying, "Hey, why am I leaving myself vulnerable when my neighbours are taking steps to protect themselves?" Then you're cutting the thread in multiple locations, not just one. We may not have a usable trail anywhere anymore. It might be too fragmented, especially if goes through difficult terrain that's not very accessible by good roads.

We need to understand that there's a pre-existing ecosystem here. The government needs to understand that. Even just the perception that this negotiated co-existence, a web of mutually beneficial but individual and distinct agreements, is going to be replaced with a hard legal framework will be enough to kill the ecosystem in our trail system.

I know from our reading of this bill that this is not the intention—I hope. The intention is to allow for solid legal support to be put into place within the ecosystem where it could be beneficial for both landowners and trail users. This would only be reached through more individually negotiated agreements.

But that is not the perception out there, unfortunately. Whatever we can say about good intentions, there has been a failure of communication around this bill in a lot of places. There has been a failure to shape the discourse, and the conversation has been running wild in ways that have been very negative in parts of this province. Unfortunately, some of those wild rumours are coming out of here, out of the people who are representing the people.

That's unfortunate because the bottom line is that we are supposed to give pertinent, good and straightforward

information, and not feed into their frenzy—whether it's the landowners or whoever it is that's being negative about it—by standing up here and saying they're right when they're totally wrong, off-base, don't know or haven't read it. There's no threat to any landowner on his land—owning it or government taking it off him.

It's really irresponsible for individuals to stand up in this Legislature and create havoc over something that's not true. Whatever we can say about good intentions, there has been a failure of communication in more than one place. There has been a failure to shape the discourse and the conversation, and it has been running wild in ways that I can't believe. Withdrawing the bill won't fix that. There are amendments that could be made to improve this bill and clarify these issues. I would certainly support that.

What it's going to take is communication. Communication and consultation need to be expanded: outreach and a willingness—not too common with this government—to engage in a genuine dialogue with the people in rural and northern Ontario who are affected and worried by this bill. There needs to be a greater transparency in this bill and in the outreach. People need to have confidence that this bill will be of benefit to both landowners and trail users, that this legislation is a supplement to an enhancement of the existing trail system, not something new cooked up by the Liberals in their Toronto offices to destroy our trails. It's not true.

0940

It's not enough to engage with the lobbyists and stakeholders down here, either. Yes, the bill will affect urban trails, which are of enormous recreational benefit to the people of Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and other cities in our province. But the overwhelming impact of this bill will be in rural and northern Ontario, so let's not pretend otherwise. That's where it's really going to play a big role, so take the committee hearings and the consultations there. Farmers and snowmobilers—who are often the same people, I might add—aren't going to travel in great numbers here to Queen's Park from Timmins–James Bay or Kenora–Rainy River or Timiskaming–Cochrane. They won't be running down the 401 or on our 400-series highways on their snowmobiles—unless we can't move. They probably won't even travel in great numbers from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound or Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, because it's inconvenient and expensive for those people to come down here. They have to stay in a hotel; they have to stay for the hearings; they have to pay for gas. Take it to the people. Take it to the areas that are affected. Take it to the north and talk to the people who live there.

I'm a firm believer, from any military experience my family has had, that if you really want to know what's going on, you don't talk to the generals or the captains; you talk to the guy in the trench. You go to the front lines. You talk to the people who do it every day, not the big guys who make decisions in glass rooms somewhere in downtown Toronto. It doesn't work.

This is a huge province, Speaker, bigger than 85% of the countries on Earth. Travel here is expensive and time-

consuming. It is completely out of touch and insulting to rural northern Ontarians to say that they need to take time out of their lives and spend hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars to come all the way to Toronto in order to make their voices heard. And most times, when they come to make their voices heard, they don't get the result they want, and then they go home even madder. That just perpetuates the poisonous idea that only Toronto matters in this province.

People are coming to the conclusion that there are two provinces: the province of Toronto, and the rest of us. I'll tell you, there's a movement in the north. It's almost like the old days of Quebec. They're getting to a point where they want to separate. That's how bad it is. The people feel that way under this government. It has to change. I'm not saying it's absolutely true in every circumstance, but we have a real problem with people feeling that way. It's not to anyone's benefit on either side to divide this province. This is one Ontario, and we need to make sure that all Ontarians' voices are heard equally and that they all feel like a part of the process and the decision-making. Ontario is Ontario.

So if we have a bill sitting here that primarily affects rural and northern Ontario, then that's where the hearings need to be. Unfortunately, to our great disappointment, the comments of many members of the governing party suggest that they feel otherwise and that they've done a marvellous job with their consultation.

Speaker, I just have to insert something here. With all due respect to the government or other people in this building, people make decisions here—it would be like somebody over there who was a teacher telling me, after 30 years of experience, what goes on at a steel plant when they've never walked through the door; or like a bureaucrat in downtown Toronto telling me about Hamilton when they've never crossed the Skyway Bridge. You've got to walk in their shoes. You've got to feel for the community. You've got to know. How do we do that? You listen to the members from those areas who talk to their people. You listen to their ideas in committee. You don't brush them aside and say, "We know best because we're in downtown Toronto." Sorry; that doesn't work. You're going to tell somebody who has never left downtown Toronto about the bear hunt—they probably haven't seen a bear other than at the zoo. So I'm really, really shocked at some of the decisions that are made without input from the people who come from those areas.

I wouldn't dare to tell the member from Kenora–Rainy River—because I've never been there; I'd like to go there; I should—what's going on in Kenora, and she probably wouldn't tell me what's going on in Hamilton. She probably hasn't gone through a steel mill in her life. I probably haven't fished on Lake Superior. I probably haven't fished, period.

When we start listening, in this Legislative Building, to the people who know their areas and know the people, this Legislature will work a lot better. And that's what committee is supposed to be about: amendments to make changes. In my years here, Speaker, I sat many times on

committee. Half of them walk out when you're talking; they're playing on their BlackBerry; reading newspapers. They don't care. You want to get up and bang your head on the wall, walk out, phone the people—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: They don't like that because it's true.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: They're obviously listening.

Mr. Paul Miller: I was in committees long before you were, and I know how it operates. So the bottom line is—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Speak through the Chair.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm willing to help my colleagues, but if they're not going to be helped, it's pretty hard.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Speak through the Chair. Okay? There's no cross-talk, please. Let's be respectful. Let's speak through the Chair. There's no cross-talk.

Member, continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm willing to help the colleagues—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Let's make sure that we are respectful. The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, speak through the Chair. And I respectfully ask the government side—I know that there are some inflammatory words that have been used. We're going to deal with them. I'm going to start giving people one warning, and after that you'll be named. That's how it's going to be.

The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: As I said, Speaker, we're willing to help our colleagues and are speaking very forcefully about the facts and the myths in this bill. But it's the government's job to promote their legislation, to ensure that the public has a proper understanding of it and to make sure that the bill doesn't have a negative impact on the trail system in Ontario, because if it does, if it continues to result in the closure of trails, then it will have been nothing more than another failure.

Hamilton is blessed with a beautiful waterfront trail, with the Red Hill Valley Recreational Trail, the Royal Botanical Gardens and, of course, the Bruce Trail that runs along the escarpment. We're lucky to be on the escarpment and to have access to the natural beauty of the Niagara Peninsula. We also have over 100 waterfalls. How many cities anywhere in the world can boast that—100 waterfalls? A great number of these are accessible by the trails.

We have the Battlefield Creek trail, which is rich with history. It connects to both the Bruce Trail and to Battlefield Park in my hometown of Stoney Creek. This is a major historic site, as it was the location of one of the most important battles in the War of 1812. The British victory there was crucial in preventing US troops from seizing Upper Canada. Many of the members are probably aware that I'm a bit of a history buff myself. I participate in the re-enactments every summer. So I really

do appreciate the trail, not just for its natural beauty but for its connection to our country's history.

I would suggest that some of these members might want to come down to Stoney Creek and see the re-enactment. It's wonderful. There are 700 re-enactors. I'll be happy to show them how to fire a cannon.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll be happy to show them how to fire a cannon, especially the member from Waterdown. I'd like to have him over there.

We have the Bayfront Park Trail. We have the Breezeway Trail running through part of my riding from Beach Boulevard to Grays Road. The Chedoke radial trail is a pedestrian and bicycle pathway on the former right-of-way of the Brantford and Hamilton Electric Railway. It's actually part of the Bruce Trail and it links with a Hamilton Conservation Authority trail that crosses the Iroquoia Heights Conservation Area.

We have a new thing that's going to happen in Hamilton: A boulevard is going to be named after Tesla, the famous inventor who ran some of the first electrical lines in North American, along Burlington Street.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I thought you were going to say it was named after you.

Mr. Paul Miller: No.

There's an Escarpment Rail Trail, a real gem. It's an accessible multi-use trail developed on an abandoned CN line that extends from above the escarpment near Albion Falls and heads west to the lower city. It has some wonderful views of the lower city, of the escarpment and the former Hamilton Brick Works. We have Spencer Creek Trail and the beautiful Spencer Gorge Wilderness Area trails. Speaker, there are many, many more.

Most people in Hamilton are aware of these trails, but the truth is that very few people have an idea of quite how many we have. I very much appreciate that there is a trails strategy in this bill, that as well as expanding the distance and the number of trails themselves, there will be a real effort to increase awareness of the trails and make it easier for people to access them.

0950

If we protect and expand our system of trails, we can open up even more of our spectacular landscapes and scenery to the public. This is a real public good we're talking about. At the same time, we will improve our offering for tourists from both home and abroad. We have some of the world's outstanding natural beauty here in our province. We should do everything in our power to facilitate public access to and enjoyment of it.

The key word here is "facilitate," Speaker; we cannot impose. Access to these trails is based on respect, trust and understanding with the landowners whose land these trails criss-cross.

The crux of the question is how to provide and facilitate access to privately owned land. How do we promote that and facilitate that in a respectful and mutually beneficial way, where all parties are protected, where liability issues and ownership rights are clarified, and where we don't create an undue need for the services of lawyers.

Here's an old Viking quote—that's going back:

"Kalf: We heard you took yourself away into the wilderness. Why?"

"Bjorn: I went to find someone."

"Kalf: Who?"

"Bjorn: Myself."

Now, the minister is already quoted as saying this: "An easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agreed to do so."

It is important that the government communicates this repeatedly, and that members on this side of the House do likewise in response to their constituents. But it seems to me that the concerns expressed by the landowners across this province cannot be eased entirely by spoken words alone. With all that has happened, the only way to reassure landowners of the truth of this statement is to insert clear language to the effect of this statement directly into this bill. We need an amendment that does this.

Colleagues' contributions to the debate: One of the benefits of having deferred my lead on this bill was the opportunity to listen to many more contributions than usual to this debate in the House.

My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane brought his wealth of knowledge and experience to this debate on Monday. I think it's very important that the government listen deeply to his comments as a farmer, a landowner and a snowmobiler from northern Ontario. It is doubly important because there isn't an abundance of that experience in this government caucus. Proportionately more of the opposition members represent ridings seriously affected by this bill, and that needs to be recognized.

Now, snowmobiling is both a practical means of transport in northern Ontario and a valuable tourist attraction. Northern Ontario is probably the best place in the world to snowmobile. But that isn't just due to the blessings of nature, Speaker. As my colleague has said, it's because of the very hard work of the snowmobiling clubs across the province that groom these trails and negotiate access to the trails with landowners.

Sometimes I wonder if the governing party misunderstands the land ownership situation in northern Ontario and assumes that there isn't really a problem because so much of the land is the property of the crown. Yes, it's true that a lot of the land is crown land, but certainly not all of it. In well-inhabited areas, where most of the well-used trails are, much of the land is private. What that means, Speaker, is that very many of the trails in northern Ontario are on private land. The trail-use clubs, mainly the snowmobile clubs, negotiate access with the private landowners and obtain their permission to use their private land.

As my colleague said, this opens up parts of the province that would never otherwise be seen. No roads go through many of these areas. Like some of the remote railroads in this country, such as the ones crossing the Rockies, these trails offer people an opportunity to see a part of the world that is otherwise inaccessible to the public.

The private landowners don't derive any profit from this, Speaker. They do it as good community citizens. They want to give back to their community and to their neighbours. Many are snowmobilers themselves. Of course, everyone gains when the landowners in a community participate in that sport. It's the very opposite of the tragedy of the commons.

Communities, especially tight-knit ones like those in rural Ontario, don't operate purely based on laws. They operate by norms, by custom, by recognition, by trust and by goodwill. It can be very dangerous to a community if you try, without good reason, to impose laws to replace some of those informal mechanisms. Now, I don't believe that this bill is attempting to impose legal arrangements such as easements on rural communities, but we have seen that even the perception that this is the case has upset the fine balance that keeps a community healthy and public-spirited.

There are many good reasons why a landowner and a private trail-user organization might want to agree upon an easement as the best protective arrangement for both parties, and this bill facilitates that. But there will equally be a great number of situations where this is not the case, where the arrangements based on trust and mutual respect are enough and should be allowed to continue. This bill will allow them to continue.

But people around this province are now worried that this is not the case. They're worried that their agreements of goodwill will be converted into legal claims of one party upon the other. When that happens, when the seed of fear is planted, the trust that sustains these agreements breaks down. Again, no involuntary easements will be created as a result of this bill. I repeat: No landowners are under threat.

My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane gave a great example of where an easement might be of great benefit to both a private landowner and an association of trail users. He got the example from the president of the Tri-Town Sno Travellers, so I'd like to recognize him as well.

If there's a farm or a piece of land that you're going to go across and the snowmobile club needs to put a bridge there—and the bridge is a quarter million dollars right now—there's no guarantee, other than a handshake with the landowner, that they can access the bridge after it's up. If the snowmobile club could have an easement to get to that bridge, they'd have more confidence in their investment of time and money, which would improve the trails all over our province. The bridge would be more likely to go ahead, and both the club and the landowner could gain from it. The landowner could maybe drive his tractor across it to get to other parts of his property. There are mutual agreements that could work for both sides that should be looked into deeply.

As he said, words like "easement" and "covenant" are trigger words for lawyers. The fact that this is optional is somewhat lost through that trigger, so we need a lot more clarity in the language and a lot better communication and outreach so that people can see for themselves and be reassured that existing arrangements are not affected. The

cloud of lawyers and the possibility of losing power over your land are blown away. As for the options around easements, those need to be written and communicated very clearly as well so that everyone is clear about their rights.

Now we'll talk about assignment of easements. Something that many of the members and their constituents found problematic is the ability of an eligible body to assign an easement to another eligible body. There simply aren't enough conditions on this, Speaker. This is the kind of provision that will have landowners dead set against this legislation. If a provision of this kind has to be included, then it should be conditional on the consent of the property owner. If no consent can be obtained, then perhaps in this instance there should be a provision for the parties to agree on termination of the easement.

Let me read this problematic subsection aloud. Schedule 1, subsection 12(8): "An easement may be assigned by an eligible body to another eligible body, but the assignment must be in writing and must be registered on title to the land."

If and when the committee hearings and consultations are taken on the road and around this province, which is what needs to happen, then I expect you will hear a lot of opposition to this, and it is important to hear the opposition. We need to listen to the people it will affect and listen to the people's ideas to fix the problem and make this subsection more acceptable to both sides.

Alienation of rural and northern Ontario—and you would hope that if not out of respect for the people of rural and northern Ontario, and if not out of genuine desire for good public policy, the government might be persuaded to engage more deeply with these communities out of pure political self-interest because nothing's going to alienate them further from this government faster than the perception that they're ramming through a bill for rural Ontario designed in Toronto and that the only consultations they'll hold or that matter to them are with other people who live in Toronto; that they won't have the decency or respect to go and have open, two-way conversations with the people and communities most directly affected by this legislation.

That infuriates people, Speaker. It alienates them, and it causes great resentment. And that mood is growing in this province. Every so often, we receive letters calling for northern secession. That would be awful. But it's not just geographic. This government is going out of its way to alienate so many demographics and segments of the population across the province, and that includes people here in Toronto, believe it or not.

There is a perception that when the government wants to make a policy, it talks to people in Toronto, it holds some sort of consultations here in Toronto and makes the decisions here in Toronto. There's a lot of truth to that, Speaker, but I think we're looking at this through the wrong lens. It's not about Toronto as a place. The government is not talking to the 99% of regular people in Toronto. It's talking to a very small group of influential people in Toronto with a particularly high concentration on Bay Street. It's an old, tired government that is speak-

ing to an echo bubble that is growing even smaller in diameter, and getting closer to the inner circle, a circle of powerful, influential and wealthy people.

The ordinary person in Ontario doesn't have a say in this government's policy, whether they live in Windsor, Timmins, Hamilton or Toronto. It's the big corporations' interests and the top 1% that are driving many of these decisions. It's a sad state of affairs, Speaker.

1000

Like I have said, this is a well-intentioned bill that we can support at second reading, provided that the government is willing to accept constructive amendments, and provided that the government is willing to take consultations on the road to communities impacted by this legislation. But the culture and—I hate to use the word—sleaze surrounding the government have created a deep distrust among the people of Ontario, and rightly so. Now they're hearing about a bill that might take away their rights over their land. They're willing to believe it, or at least consider the possibility, because the government's track record doesn't give them any confidence in its good faith or good intentions.

Remember that the farmers and the landowners don't gain personally from allowing access to their trails, so when they hear bad stories about the bill, they rightly get nervous, because they have a lot to lose if it's true—a lot more than they have to gain if it's false. It's going to require very honest, good-faith outreach from this government to reassure private landowners that they have nothing to fear about this bill. I know it can be done because last year, when this bill was introduced, I had a very constructive, open round-table meeting with the minister's staff about the bill. From that meeting and from the comments by the minister, I do believe that it's a well-intentioned bill. But it's going to take a lot of engagement and communication to reassure people around this province and dispel the doubts that groups like the Ontario Landowners Association have stirred up.

Speaker, I see I have only a few seconds. This bill has a lot of potential, but as I said before, the people in this Legislature, especially the governing body, have to start listening to the people who represent northern Ontario. I wouldn't dare to go into Kenora–Rainy River and tell their town council, their farmers or their hunters and fishing people what to do. It would be totally off base. Hopefully, when this goes to committee, the government listens to the people who represent northern Ontario. Then—just then—it might work.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Congratulations to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I don't often get a chance to follow my colleague from Hamilton in the assembly, but I'm pleased to do so today. As part of that, I want to take a minute to introduce Antoin Diamond, who is here from the Bruce Trail Association. Thank you for coming today.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talked a bit about alienation from government. I understand that. I get alienated from government when I think of the Red

Hill Valley and putting a freeway down the middle of it. I get alienated from governments at different levels when I see 85% of our wetlands paved over—these precious resources we have that we need to be protecting and seeing as a treasure.

I appreciated the honourable member's remarks very much, particularly his reference to the Bruce Trail. When I leave my house, I'm about from here to the honourable member's seat away from actually walking onto the Bruce Trail, and it's something that my wife and I enjoy very much. It's one of the longest and oldest hiking trails in Canada, and it provides a continuous opportunity all the way from the Bruce down. It's wonderful.

I really appreciated the member's comments about respect, trust and a shared sense of interest. I think we share that in common. I just want to say to the honourable member that I'd love to join you on a trail somewhere in Hamilton.

I'll end with this, honourable member:

Happy trails to you, until we meet again.

Happy trails to you, keep smiling until then.

Mr. Paul Miller: Roy Rogers.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: You're right: Roy Rogers. I was eight years old. I watched it every Saturday morning. It got me hooked on trails.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: Let me begin by congratulating the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the other Miller, on an excellent one-hour presentation on Bill 100. I think he did a good job of raising concerns.

I especially liked his points about consultation. I think a lot of the problems with the misconceptions with this bill have come about because the government didn't do a very good job of consulting. They say they consulted with 250 groups. Well, they missed the Ontario Landowners Association. That's kind of a key group that they missed. A lot of the trails are open because of our landowners that generously—they don't get benefit from it, really; they just do it out of the goodness of their hearts, allowing snowmobile trails etc. on their land.

I absolutely agree that we need clear language that makes it very clear that easements are voluntary. In fact, I have a letter from Bob Clarke, the president of the Snowcrest Riders in Gravenhurst, saying that they are having trail closures as of April 1, some that affect major bridges that cost millions of dollars to build.

He says, in his letter here, "Mr. Miller, the landowners I have talked to want section 12 of proposed Bill 100 to be amended to include the simple wording below that Minister Michael Coteau has already stated:

"An easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agreed to do so."

He says, "Add the above statement from the minister to section 12 of Bill 100, and we may address the concerns of the landowner."

I completely support what the member is suggesting. I also completely support the idea that this has got to be—if ever there was a bill that needs to be taken around the province by committee, this one needs to go around northern and rural Ontario so that those groups that have concerns about it can have a say and deal with that. I sure hope the government does that in this case.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member from Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your new role.

I want to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for a good bit of debate there for an hour. He raises a few good points. The consultation and the engagement piece is very important. The piece about amendments that are already coming forward as we're having this debate to make sure that the legislation reflects some of those practical, I think, solutions should be forthcoming.

The problem has been, though, the last couple of times I've been in committee, none of these practical amendments that groups, agencies and stakeholders are putting forward are actually getting approved at a committee level under a majority Liberal government. Just this week in the budget committee, some amendments were put forward to address communication of budgets and policies that would have fallen under the AODA and would have improved communications for people with disabilities—those who are blind and deaf—and the government members voted those amendments down.

A couple of weeks ago, a number of amendments were put forward on the PTSD bill, and once again the government members voted those amendments down. It's fine for stakeholders to come forward, and it's good. I think we need to travel the bill and make sure that we are reaching out to those people in rural and northern areas that are going to be affected. But if they're going to put forward solutions that will make this bill palatable for them, we need to be assured that, when those amendments actually come to committee, the government members are not going to just shake their heads and vote those amendments down, as they did with the PTSD bill and as they did with the AODA amendments in the budget deliberations earlier this week.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Madam Chair—sorry, Deputy Speaker—and congratulations on your ascension to this role.

I would like to add comment to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on his excellent presentation. He's very passionate, obviously, about this issue. I appreciated very much the passion he brought to it, but I would like to lay to rest this notion that this has not been widely consulted on.

Starting in 2005, there was a whole series of consultations, with nine full-day sessions and 14 regional consul-

tations. In 2013, 80 municipalities were contacted and 48 trail organizations, including the Moonbeam Nature Trails, Kawartha Trans Canada Trail Association, Forest Lea Trails Association, Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance, the Peterborough-Hastings Trans Canada Trail Association, Simcoe County Trails, Voyageur Trail Association, Rainbow Routes Association, Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, Kawartha Lakes Green Trails Alliance, the Dufferin-Grey ATV Club Inc., and it goes on and on and on.

In addition, other non-profit organizations were widely consulted on this bill in 2013 so that we did get the bill mostly right. If there are to be amendments, let's make sure they're good amendments and not some of the spurious kinds of puffery amendments we often see from the other side.

Speaker, we also had nine not-for-profit organizations, including the O'Hara Volunteers Association, the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy, the Ottawa River Institute, Ottawa Riverkeeper—and so many more: the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; the Toronto to Algonquin Greenway. We had aboriginal consultations taking place. Let's be clear, this has been widely consulted upon.

I think there might be a great opportunity to hear more in terms of the bill and what the current bill looks like. I look forward to hearing from all across the province of Ontario on ways that, if it can be improved, we certainly would like improve it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek to wrap up this round of debate.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Ted and I—Minister McMeekin and I—share a love for Hamilton, its trails and its Royal Botanical Gardens. It's a hidden treasure that most people in Ontario don't realize. We have the most waterfalls of any city in, probably, I would say, North America. And so I recommend that you come and visit us. Believe it or not, in spite of the grumpiness, we can be hospitable.

I'd also like to thank the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka for his insight. There's the perfect guy to talk to. He probably rides snowmobiles. He's from rural Ontario. He understands his people. He's been here a long time. It's because his name's the same, but I certainly respect Norm's knowledge of his surroundings and the people he represents. Certainly he would be beneficial to any discussions.

Of course, my good friend from Welland is well aware, being close to Niagara Falls, that there are a few trails down there, too, and in Welland. Being a former mayor, she's well aware of what people face, whether they be landowners or recreational groups.

Now, my friend from Beaches—East York: Well, I have to say to him that he did rhyme off a lot of people. I'm not sure where the consultations took place, whether it was mostly here or in the particular areas he meant. You can have consultations, Speaker, but if you don't listen to the people in the consultations—if you would have talked to all those people, who in the world would

have put section 12 into that bill? That is the worst thing you could have done. If you were listening to all these people, you would have heard that, I'm sure, because the landowners have made it quite clear. So I'm not quite sure who was listening at those consultations or how many people actually attended them and came back.

Thank you so much, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Before I recess the House, I just want to remind the members that you are not to use first names. Remember that? The rules? You are to use the riding and not the first name. You know the rules.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thanks so much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing it's almost 10:15, we're going to recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Would members please join me in welcoming three prominent members of the GTA's Turkish community? Sitting in the members' gallery to my right are Mr. Erdeniz Şen, the consul general of the Republic of Turkey in Toronto; Ms. Rüçhan Akkök, the director of the Turkish Society of Canada and a resident of my riding of Mississauga—Streetsville; and Mr. Cenk Sayin, the vice-president of the Turkish Society of Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: On behalf of Minister Chan, the MPP for Markham—Unionville, I'd like to introduce the page captain for the day, Samantha Su, and her mother, Elaine Cheung. She will be in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: In the members' gallery here today we have Caleb Ellis and his wife, Kelly Semkiw. They are here with their Jersey of Courage, making Ontario workplaces more safe.

After question period, Speaker, we'll have a jersey out here for all the MPPs to sign to show support for safer workplaces in Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome the recipients of the Leading Women Building Communities award from my riding: Adeena Niazi, who is the executive director of the Afghan Women's Organization; Dr. Barbara Landau, who is the CEO of Cooperative Solutions; Ricky Goldenberg, the principal at Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute; and Dr. Nasreen Khatri, a psychiatrist at Baycrest.

I also would like to introduce Afie Mardukhi, who works in my constituency office and makes all these things happen. Thank you, all of you, for what you do, and welcome.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to introduce two guests who are here to spend a day with their MPP: Mr. Bill Doyle and Mr. John Ricci.

Mr. Han Dong: On behalf of the honourable member from Willowdale and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs,

I would like to introduce the mother of page captain Barton Lu, Jing Shu Natasha Wang; and father, Ping Lu. They'll be here in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park Lucille Kyle, vice-chair of the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board, along with my staffer Travis Hoover, EA to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce and welcome, here in the members' gallery, my husband, Germinio Pio Politi, who is here visiting this morning.

Ms. Cindy Forster: In the members' gallery, I'd like to introduce Nick Bodo, chair of youth service for the Rotary Club of Welland. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would like to introduce my good friend Scott Sutherland, who is joined here by Alfred Josef Baldacchino, the Prince Grand Master of the Byzantine Order of the Holy Sepulchre, and his colleagues from all over Europe. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to introduce Troy Russell. He's a constituent and the father of page Vanessa Russell, who I personally think is doing a fantastic job. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I wish to acknowledge Jennifer Crowson and her son Owen Crowson; Irene Turpie; and Ingrid Muschta and her son, Alexander. I'm not sure if they're in the audience yet, but they're on their way here to support Down syndrome today.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, ça me fait plaisir d'accueillir aujourd'hui, dans la galerie de l'ouest, Jean-François Morin, qui est un professeur à La Cité collégiale dans ma circonscription. Bienvenue, Jean-François.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Multiple police investigations, corruption charges in Sudbury, allegations of government contracts being awarded in exchange for hefty donations to the governing party—the people of Ontario work hard to pay their taxes, and they don't deserve a government mired in scandal. They deserve to know that their tax dollars were not given away in exchange for donations to the Liberal Party.

Will the Premier give the people of Ontario the truth they deserve? Will she call for a commission of inquiry to investigate the fundraising practices of the Ontario Liberal Party?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just remind this House, and remind the people of Ontario, in the wake of this question, that this whole discussion about the changes

to fundraising rules was in this context, first of all, that all parties—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Both sides are not doing me a favour, nor anyone else that needs to hear. This will be my last generic comment. I'll move to individuals, one at a time, and I'll get there.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that all parties—I can only assume, with integrity—have been operating within a set of rules. I had made an indication that we were going to move to change those rules. We had already made some changes in terms of real-time disclosure and putting limits in place. We are making those changes. We are moving ahead with those changes. We will bring legislation in the spring.

But I think it's important to remember that the context of this discussion was a need to change the rules for everyone, rules that we were all operating in with integrity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Just because this government brought in new rules for Ornge Air, it didn't stop the OPP from investigating a shady business deal.

Just because the government brought in new rules for saving emails, that didn't stop the OPP from charging senior Liberal staffers David Livingston and Laura Miller for wiping away evidence of a scandal.

Nothing this Premier can promise about reform is going to change the fact that how this government has given out contracts and grants has to be subject to a full investigation.

I will repeat my question, because for two days I have not gotten an answer. To the Premier: Will she do the right thing? Will she call a commission of inquiry, or is she going to wait for another police investigation into her government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to go through, once again, what it is we are doing. I've talked about the context in which this conversation has begun and is taking place.

As I said, we have already taken a number of initiatives. In 2007, we were the party that introduced third-party advertising rules for the first time. We introduced real-time disclosure for political donations. As I announced last June, we're committed to making further changes.

As I have said, our government plans to introduce legislation on political donations this spring, including transitioning away from union and corporate donations. That's why I made the decision, that I talked about in this House, to immediately cancel upcoming private fundraisers, which I have done. Ministers can continue to do small-group, high-value fundraisers, but those events have to be publicly disclosed before they happen—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Start the clock. Wrap up.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—and the second stipulation is that ministers will not be fundraising with stakeholders in those meetings from their own ministries.

It's important that we get this right. I look forward to the meeting on Monday with the leaders of the opposition parties.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Once again to the Premier: There's an expression, "Where there's smoke, there's fire." And boy, there is a lot of smoke right now.

All the Premier's talk of reform is really an admission on her part that there is rot in this government. The people deserve to know if this government is rotten to the core. They deserve to know if the companies felt obligated to donate in order to receive grants and contracts. They deserve to know if companies were made to feel that they had to donate in order to get a government meeting or a contract.

Why won't the Premier give the people of Ontario the truth? I will repeat again: Will the Premier call a commission of inquiry?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let's be clear. The Leader of the Opposition is talking a big game, with lots of bluster about this issue, but the truth is that there's only one leader who is taking real action and that is the Premier.

So I ask you again: If you really believe what you are saying, why aren't you cancelling your secret private fundraiser? I just do not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville: second time, and direct your comments to the Chair. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like the Leader of the Opposition to explain why he's not cancelling his \$5,000-a-person fundraiser at Barberian's Steak House. It puts a new meaning to "stakeholder": the "steak holders" at Barberian's Steak House.

Why wouldn't he prove that this is not just political gamesmanship and that he sincerely believes we should put an end to that kind of fundraising?

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. If the thought of calling a public inquiry is just too scary for this Premier to consider, then let me try a smaller step. This Premier said she would be open and transparent. She made mandate letters to her ministers pub-

lic—well, almost public; she didn't include the part about fundraising quotas.

Will the Premier—and this is a very important question—release a list of every company that received a grant or contract from her government, and a list of every company and association that successfully lobbied her government for a policy change? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The way that contracts are awarded and the way that grants are awarded—there are very strict rules around those. There are procurement processes. They are not political processes any more than, I assume, the development of policy on the part of the opposition parties to do with their fundraising.

The fact is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have an understanding of the seriousness of the issue. It's not helpful when it gets to the point where I literally cannot hear the response, nor is it helpful when the members of the same bench are shouting out. It does not help me in dealing with the opposition, and the same goes for the government on that side. So I'm going to ask everyone to tone it down. Thank you very much.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it's very important that people know who gives money to government parties and who gives money to opposition parties. I think the real-time disclosure of those things is very important. That's why we moved to put those rules in place and now we're going to go farther and change the rules further.

Interjections.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I recognize you, it's not helpful that I speak to somebody and seconds later they start up again.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: My question was about the contract the government is giving out. If this government really had nothing to hide, the answer to that question would have been a no-brainer. The people of Ontario deserve to know these lists. They must be made public so they can compare the lists with the lists of those donating to the Liberal Party. Based on what the media has been reporting, the public might find those two lists are pretty similar.

I ask the Premier this: Will she direct the Ontario Liberal Fund to return every donation received from the companies that got grants and contracts or that successfully lobbied for a policy change? Will the Premier pay the money back, yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. As the member was finishing the question, I was going to stand to admonish, for the second time, the deputy House leader.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Leader of the Opposition is behaving like he is as pure as the driven snow, but let's look at some questions. For his leadership campaign, he received donations from estate planning com-

panies. Then he brings forward his very first private member's bill, which benefits only them and their clients. The OMA sponsors the party convention and the next thing you know, they're standing up, demanding that doctors be paid more. We know that the Leader of the Opposition is being—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have been hearing a couple things in there that I'm not impressed with and I sure know that the members know they shouldn't be saying it.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We know the Leader of the Opposition is being investigated by the Integrity Commissioner because he tried to sell off access to the west lobby.

So my question to the Leader of the Opposition is, how much do you have to donate to get a private member's bill? How much do you have to donate to get a question asked in question period?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

As I have said in the past to other people asking questions that are borderline impugning motives, I'm going to tell the member that she has not helped herself and it will not happen again.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I've been asking serious questions about making the contracts the government gives out public and about paying the money back. Instead, I hear smears and attacks. I'm hoping that this time I can actually get an answer. If the government really wanted to show the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, second time.

It sounds to me that there's going to be a discussion amongst all of you as to how fast you want me to get to warnings, so I'm going to get to warnings. From here on in, individuals I hear—not that there's a lot of you—will get a warning.

Please finish your question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Premier: If the government really wanted to show the public that money didn't buy a meeting with a cabinet minister, they would give the money back. If this government really wanted to prove to the people of Ontario that decisions they made had absolutely nothing to do with the millions and millions of dollars in donations to the Liberal Party, they would give the money back. But the Premier won't do that and that is why we need a public inquiry to shine a light on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is warned. Who's next?

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The government doesn't want me to finish this question.

The reason we need a public inquiry to shine a light on the rot is just to find out how deep it goes. The Premier knows full well where the latest scandal is heading. Why doesn't the Premier cut her losses, do the right thing and call the public inquiry?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. Patrick Brown: And don't dodge the question. Don't dodge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would suggest not getting yourself in trouble when I'm standing.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Finance is warned.

Deputy Premier.

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's time for the Leader of the Opposition to show some leadership on this. They are still stuck in the old ways. Exhibit A: the Toronto Leader's Dinner is—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Toronto Leader's Dinner is coming up. I'm sure the caucus will all be there. Potential—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry is warned and the member from Prince Edward—Hastings is warned. And you can turn sideways all you want.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Potential donors are being encouraged to pay \$25,000 for a so-called victory table, \$10,000 more than the normal table. But it's worth the money: The extra \$10,000 gives you the opportunity to host a caucus member. When it comes to the PCs, though, the more you pay, the more you get. By donating \$30,000 or more, attendees will score an invite to a private reception—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier tasked the Ministers of Energy and Finance to sell off Hydro One. They then hired a group of bankers to manage that sell-off, and those bankers made a lot of money doing that. Then those same ministers called up those same bankers and said, "Come to our fundraiser and give us money."

Just yesterday, that pattern repeated itself. Those same bankers are going to make millions more selling off the next batch of Hydro One shares. Is the Premier really okay with this?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy is going to want to talk about the process.

I'm very aware of the young people in the Legislature right now, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am. Well, you can heckle all you want. I just want to say, and I want to say it about every member in this House: Every member in this House came into politics because they believe that there's more they can do to help the people of Ontario.

The fundraising rules that have been in place in this province have been followed by all parties. We believe that they need to be changed. I am going to work and meet with the leaders of the opposition on Monday and I am going to get their input on how they think those changes should happen. But I just want to be clear that it is my belief that this discussion is in the context of every party in this Legislature following a set of rules and following the same set of rules. I have made the assumption about the opposition parties. I hope they've made the assumption about us that we have all done that with integrity—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

I want to take a moment, please. I've noticed a couple of people in the House have devices that are open during question period. I remind you of the rules regarding the use of devices. They are not to be used in any way, shape or form during question period with regard to photos, taping or that kind of stuff. I just give you that warning now because if it appears on Twitter or if it appears anywhere else, I'll be dealing with it very severely.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Minister of Energy said that everything was fine with how the government picked the banks to sell off Hydro One. He said so because that process had been overseen by the former Auditor General, Denis Desautels.

Did the Minister of Energy at any time inform the auditor that once the sale had started, ministers would be going back to the banks involved in the sale and asking them to contribute \$7,500 a plate in a \$165,000 fundraiser?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I said yesterday, I'll state again today: The former Auditor General of Canada looked at the whole selection process and he signed off on it as being objective and fair.

But really, what's getting under their skin is the success of the Hydro One IPO and the secondary offer. We're meeting our targets to get \$5 billion to pay down debt. We've already paid down enough to save \$100 million a year in interest payments. So it's paying huge dividends. We're already ahead of our plan to invest the proceeds into the Trillium Foundation to build infrastructure. And she's probably really disturbed by the fact that the price of the shares of Hydro One since the IPO has gone up by over 15%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure the Minister of Energy didn't answer my question—which was whether or not the Auditor General was made aware of the things that were coming afterwards, which was the request for these bankers to raise money for the Liberal Party. That was the question. I'm sure the auditor didn't actually have that information.

After this small group of bankers attended a \$165,000 fundraising dinner, the Ministers of Finance and Energy gave them another slice of the Hydro One pie for dessert. How much will these bankers be earning for selling off the next batch of Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm sure that the leader of the third party has heard a lot about what happened to the original IPO and the secondary offer.

The reality is that the fees that these bankers—and there were 16 of them who were in the syndicate. There was not one or two or three; there were 16, as is normal in the process. The amount they paid in fees was almost unprecedented in terms of what they saved the province for a transaction of this size. We should be proud of what they were able to deliver in terms of low fees.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. No, actually, keep the clock going.

It's difficult when both sides are having conversations back and forth while the question is being put or the answer is being put. This announcement is for anyone, from any party: The warnings will come even if you're trying to have a conversation across, if it's disturbing.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'll just read from the Globe and Mail, after the IPO. The Globe and Mail noted that our government had "persuaded Bay Street to accept some of the lowest IPO underwriting fees imaginable." The same thing happened in the secondary offer yesterday.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. This isn't just about cabinet ministers' suspected fundraising activity; it's about the people across Ontario.

After facing a criminal investigation for the Ornge scandal, a criminal investigation for the gas plants scandal and a criminal investigation for the Sudbury bribery scandal, the same Premier has now created a fundraising scandal that's shaking people's faith in our democracy. But she says only the Liberal Party can solve the problem that they created.

Does she really think that's okay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me go back to where I started at the beginning of question period today, and that is to say that quite contrary to what the leader of the third party is saying, this whole discussion has come about because we were already on a track to change the rules. We were all operating—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member from Barrie are warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We had already introduced third-party advertising rules for the first time; we had already introduced real-time disclosure. I said last June that we were going to be moving in the direction of changing donation rules. I said in June that we were going to move in that direction; that's exactly where we are moving.

We were all—all of us in this House, all the parties in Ontario—operating under the same set of rules. I think there's a fair degree of consensus that we all need to change the rules, and I look forward to the input from the leaders of the opposition parties.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, a democratic system means that everyone has an equal voice, but people see a system here in Ontario where wealthy donors with deep pockets get one level of access to the decision-makers and everyone else gets shut out.

I believe the facts say that ministers have broken the Members' Integrity Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, and I look forward to the Integrity Commissioner's investigation and report.

In the Sudbury bribery scandal, we have people on tape saying that they were following the Premier's instructions. Do we again have a situation where the Premier is responsible for giving direction that may well prove to be against the law or in violation of the act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's interesting. The third party is trying to leave the impression that all the money they raise comes from bake sales and rummage sales and garage sales and spaghetti suppers.

1100

Let's just look at some of the other fundraising that's happening. Recently there was a fundraiser at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts—I'm sure it was lovely—limited to 10 guests at \$9,975 a person. That happened in December. That's not all; there have been other lovely events like a private stakeholder social at the Gardiner museum—I'm sure that was lovely too—limited to 10 guests only at \$9,975 per person in April.

Let's just understand: One Premier—one leader in this Legislature—has taken real action—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

As a follow-up to my concerns, I will also start looking at the members of the same bench with warnings if they're interjecting while the answer is being put.

· New question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I actually have a third part, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker.

I don't think big money should be able to buy special influence over government decisions. That's the bottom line. I think that Ontarians actually agree—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians agree and I think that they're concerned when they see a government selling access and then saying that they—and they alone, by using their majority—should be in charge of changing the rules. I don't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm insistent that we're going to do things the way they're supposed to be done. The Minister of Education is warned.

Carry on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't think people trust a government facing three criminal investigations to be in charge of changing the rules about fundraising ethics all on their own. I don't think people trust the party that created this ministerial quota system and the sale of access to decision-makers to fix it. Does the Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The leader of the third party knows that the Premier has invited herself and the Leader of the Opposition to have a meeting next week to talk about exactly this issue. Nonetheless, the party opposite is—it's time for them to walk the talk.

There is another event coming up, which means another opportunity for the leader to show some leadership: a fundraiser at Liuna Station coming up on April 13. Guests who are interested in joining the leaders' circle are asked to pay \$9,975. But it must be worth the money because it includes access to the private reception taking place before the main event.

My question really is: Will the leader of the third party continue with this event—this exclusive access at the private reception—or will she show some leadership and cancel the event?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Again, I apologize to the leader of the third party for missing her final supplementary.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. The minister is one of the largest fundraisers for the Liberals, by tapping into companies in his ministerial portfolio. He has one of the highest fundraising quotas in the cabinet. In his own words, he believes he's exceeding that quota. The minister to the Liberal Party is like a living, breathing ATM machine.

Does the minister believe that it is appropriate for a minister of the crown to raise large sums of money from stakeholders bidding on projects that are worth hundreds of millions of dollars, where he has the power to give a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down? Is that appropriate, Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm not sure whether I've ever had a fundraiser that required \$10,000, like the Leader of the Opposition. Like everybody else in this room—like the leader of the third party and the Leader of the Opposition—I've hosted fundraisers and raised funds for the party, as all of us in this room have.

But I think the anger and the angst over there comes as much from the success of what we're doing on the job, and it's a great, great deflection.

I think that the critic for the Conservatives is very surprised that the wind prices came in at 8.5 cents a kilowatt hour, which is unprecedented. They never would have expected that wind would come in lower than the average price of generation in the system.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Again to the minister: There's a reason why ministers' personal assets are managed by blind trusts while those of backbenchers and opposition members are not. It is because ministers hold a tremendous amount of power that backbenchers and opposition members don't. It is to protect the public from the influence of money in politics.

Combined, the seven successful bidders in his Large Renewable Procurement, round 1, gave the Liberal Party over a quarter of a million dollars. Those companies who gave no donations were unsuccessful. As the saying goes, something smells fishy in Denmark.

How can the public have any confidence that the same favouritism won't be the order of the day in Large Renewable Procurement, round 2?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Start the clock.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Independent Electricity System Operator conducts all of the procurement for the renewables—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We find out who the successful bidders are after the IESO has notified the winners and after it has been made public.

We have a fairness adviser to act as a neutral, disinterested and independent adviser for the procurement process, and who published a report on March 10, 2016, following the announcement of the contracts. This report is available on the website, and this is what the fairness adviser said: "We are satisfied that the evaluation of the proposals was conducted strictly in accordance with the process set out in the LRP/RFP. We detected no bias or favouritism towards or against any particular proponent."

Mr. Speaker, that fairness commissioner, or the Auditor General, Denis Desautels, could have checked—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. A week ago today, the minister proudly announced she was reducing the wait-list for autism services by kicking kids off the wait-list.

More than 10,000 parents have signed an online petition, pleading with the minister to reverse her decision to take essential therapy away from kids ages five years and over. The minister is actually telling parents that her only option to deal with the wait-list is to start fresh. Really? The only way that this government can deal with the mess that it created is by forcing kids five and over to pay the price twice?

The minister should be embarrassed, Speaker. Parents and medical professionals are not buying it. Will the minister do the right thing and immediately grandfather all children who were on the wait-list at the time of her announcement? Yes or no?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank my critic for the question. I hope she takes advantage of our offer from last week to attend a briefing to get the facts—the facts of the \$330-million investment in this program and the 16,000 new spaces.

I've heard her in the media about her suggestion to grandfather kids that are on the IBI wait-list, kids who are over five. I'm actually happy she agrees that the appropriate development window for intensive intervention, based on what the experts are telling us, is appropriate. She seems to agree with that.

But, Speaker, let's be clear: What she is suggesting actually prevents children under the age of five from receiving the services they need and, if we follow that plan, it will take four more years before children start accessing the intervention services they absolutely need. That is not good, Speaker. We have to have children in the right developmental window, based on what the experts say.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's all about this government's priorities, what is important to this government.

Children are our future. We've heard story after story from parents and families about the turmoil that they are experiencing. It's heartbreaking and, quite frankly, it's devastating. One parent asked the Liberals to imagine being told that your child is too old to benefit from the therapy that, just last week, would have given them the greatest hope of their life.

A sibling of a child with ASD begs, "Please do not take away my little brother's voice for his future." A

parent of a child who started therapy after the age of six and became verbal wants to know why this government is trying to silence other children's voices and futures. Parents wonder why this government doesn't think that their kids are worth that investment. Parents want to know why this minister is punishing vulnerable kids with autism.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: This government does care about children with ASD. This government is investing more and creating more spaces.

Again, it's important that the member of the third party actually gets the facts straight. We are giving \$8,000 per family immediately to those children who are on the list.

Interjection.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: If you want to listen, I'll tell you what it will do. It will take kids off—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Children who are transitioning from the IBI wait-list will receive \$8,000 immediately for treatment. That means they're getting treatment now if they're coming off a wait-list. And—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I'll identify the individual with a warning.

Minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: When services from that \$8,000 expire, they will continue to be in the enhanced behavioural therapy program. Most of those children will be at the top of the list, if they're not there already. That service will be enhanced by three times—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Minister, in my riding of Halton we have two large correctional facilities that play an important role in our community: Maplehurst Correctional Complex and the Vanier Centre for Women. They house close to 1,800 inmates, and that's a considerable number of people and a huge responsibility.

I've met on several occasions with correctional services staff, and they often bring up the need for more officers in our institutions. We know that our correctional staff work hard every day to keep our communities safe. It is a difficult and important job, and we thank them for their tireless efforts. But we also know that to support the good work that they do every day, we need to continue hiring more correctional officers. In fact, correctional officers often explain that additional staff will help im-

prove safety, expand programs, and build a positive correctional system.

Could the minister please explain what the government is doing to address this need?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I really do want to thank the member for Halton for her advocacy on behalf of our correctional workers in the province of Ontario.

It is absolutely clear to me and to everybody that I speak to that the correctional system must be transformed. We know that the status quo cannot continue. We also know that our correctional services staff, including our correctional officers, are the backbone of our correctional system. Government recognizes that hiring additional correctional officers must be the first step in this transformation. That is why we have already hired 710 new correctional officers since 2013.

We're not stopping there. Last month, I had the pleasure to join the members from Halton and Burlington, along with Alex Sawicki and Gord Longhi from OPSEU, at the Ontario Correctional Services College, where we announced that we'll be hiring an additional 2,000 new correctional officers over the next three years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you for that answer, Minister.

I was also pleased to join you for that announcement, because to me it symbolized how our government is moving forward with the transformation of corrections in Ontario. It was also a powerful opportunity to witness public service in action, and to talk to corrections recruits about their desire to make a difference in the lives of those they hope to help on a daily basis. I know, too, that the addition of these new corrections officers will make an important difference in the safe and secure operations of institutions across our province and help to put "corrections" back in "correctional services."

That said, Mr. Speaker, as the minister works hard to add new corrections officers to the system, there are other challenges that need to be addressed. In addition to the need for more staff, we are hearing about the need to increase mental health supports for inmates and to develop more effective rehabilitation programs across Ontario.

Minister, we already know that building bigger jails in Ontario is not the only answer to addressing these challenges, nor is it the way to build safer communities in our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, through you, will the minister please explain his plan to continue transforming corrections in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: That's a very good question. The member is absolutely right. We need to make sure that we transform the system, and the way we deal with the capacity issue is not by building more jails, but in fact by reducing the demand for jails. That's where the success will lie, and that's what is going to ensure that our communities are safe. It's important for exactly that reason that we invest in mental health training for our correc-

tional officers and services for inmates, so that we can provide them the appropriate care they need while they are in our care and custody.

That's why we have added 32 new mental health nurses across Ontario and worked with CAMH to develop additional mental health training for those who work in our institutions. A comprehensive review of our segregation policies is also under way. In addition, we are building a 122-bed regional intermittent centre at EMDC, which is going to help further.

Speaker, there is a lot more to do. These transformations will not happen overnight, but we are committed at our end to get the job done.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Premier. Earlier this week, the Toronto Sun reported on the dozens of private corporations that have both donated to the Ontario Liberal Party and received government grants. This includes corporations like Linamar, who donated \$9,300 to the Ontario Liberals and afterwards received \$1.5 million from the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. Many other corporations, like OpenText, have also made significant donations to the Ontario Liberal Party, only to receive significant government grants afterwards. Why does the Premier support and engage in this type of pay for play?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll accept that transfer—but again, we're getting darn close to the same kind of accusation of impugning motive. So I would ask you to be cautious and find other ways to say what you want to say. I'm trying to be as free as possible, but I need to have control of that as part of the parliamentary process here.

Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me just say, Mr. Speaker—and I can say this without any doubt, unequivocally—that our business support programs are completely depoliticized in their decision-making process. Absolutely, completely, without one shred of doubt I can say that.

What I can say as well is, the majority of our—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're adding yourselves to my list. The member for Beaches–East York is warned, the leader of the third party is warned and the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is warned.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The question for Ontarians that they deserve to know is, does the Leader of the Opposition support those investments we've made that have brought \$29 billion of private sector investment to Ontario, created or retained 160,000 jobs? We know where the critic stands. Where does his leader stand, Mr. Speaker? Or is he going to flip-flop on this issue like he does on all the others?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Despite the fact that in less than 10 years Ontario's debt has grown by 91%, this government continues to send taxpayers' dollars to private, for-profit corporations. In fact, this government has implemented a rigid fundraising scheme where it appears that Ontario Liberal donors are receiving preferential treatment and inappropriate government access.

1120

In order to clear the air, I requested a list of all corporate grants from the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure back in January, but this morning I'd like to make a wider request. Will the Premier disclose all government grant and contract recipients and immediately refund all donations for any organization that received grants, subsidies or contracts for which they lobbied the Liberal government?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Our government has invested \$2.8 billion, which we're very proud of, in support for business investments. That has attracted \$29 billion in business investment and helped to retain or create 160,000 jobs.

The question I think Ontarians deserve to know—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not stopping.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned and the member from Nipissing is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not suggesting challenging the Chair. Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The question that Ontarians deserve to know is, is the Leader of the Opposition standing with his critic in opposition to 160,000 jobs that we've created, or is he standing with us? When he was in Ottawa, he supported a government that partnered with us on many of those investments. Is he going to flip on this, is he going to flop on this, or is he going to flip-flop all over the place so Ontarians have no idea where he stands—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is for the Premier. People living on reserves in Canada are 10 times more likely to die in a house fire than in the rest of Canada. The community of Pikangikum knows this reality better than most after last week's deadly fire that wiped out nine lives—three generations living under one roof.

Does the Premier support the community's calls for an immediate coroner's inquest that will look into the social, economic and cultural factors that led to this tragedy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is going to want to speak to this, but I want to just say that this was a terrible tragedy, and I agree with the community members and with the member of the third party, who sug-

gests that there are very deep-rooted and connected challenges that a community like Pikangikum is facing.

I have been to Pikangikum. I have met with the band council and I am very aware of the advances we must make on education. Pikangikum is one of the communities that doesn't have running water. There is clean water on the reserve but it isn't connected to all of the homes. Those are the challenges that we need to move forward with.

We have strategies in place in terms of investment on the part of the provincial government. I'm very optimistic that now that we have a federal government that is paying attention to this issue we are actually going to make even more progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: The community needs to know that just because there are fewer stories being written in the media today that there won't be any less action from the government.

Pikangikum has a fire truck but no running water to its homes, as the Premier mentioned. It has overcrowded, dilapidated homes. The conditions are there today for another deadly fire.

My question is, what is the Premier—not any other level of government, irrespective of any other level of government—going to do to prevent another needless, deadly fire in not only Pikangikum but in other remote First Nation communities throughout Treaty 9 and beyond?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will say that the challenges confronting a community like Pikangikum, but Pikangikum in particular, are multifaceted, as the member has said. That is why our Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is working across government in terms of economic growth opportunities and health outcome improvement issues. We're developing an aboriginal education strategy because we know that aboriginal indigenous kids are graduating at a much lower rate than the rest of the population.

All of those things are critical. But also critical are very tangible issues like housing, like water, making sure we get communities off boil-water orders, that we hook up the clean water in Pikangikum to communities.

This is a high priority of ours. As I said, now that we have a federal government that's interested in this issue, we'll be able to move forward more quickly.

ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

M. Yvan Baker: Ma question est pour la procureure générale. Madame la Ministre, je sais que notre gouvernement est profondément résolu à garantir l'accès à la justice pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes. Le financement des programmes d'aide juridique est l'une des nombreuses façons dont nous démontrons cet engagement. L'aide juridique permet aux personnes les plus vulnérables de se prendre en charge, en leur donnant le soutien et les services juridiques dont elles ont besoin.

De la représentation dans la salle d'audience elle-même, aux services locaux dans les cliniques communautaires au sein de différents domaines tels que l'aide sociale ou le droit du logement, à des conseils sur les droits et les processus juridiques, Aide juridique Ontario assure que les Ontariens et les Ontariennes à faible revenu ont accès à des services juridiques de haute qualité.

Madame la Ministre, pourriez-vous informer l'Assemblée de la façon dont notre gouvernement améliore l'accès aux services juridiques en Ontario?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier le député d'Etoibicoke-Centre pour sa question, une question très importante et très appropriée.

Alors, tout comme dans le secteur de la santé et dans d'autres secteurs, je crois que l'accès aux services juridiques doit être basé sur les besoins des gens et non sur les avoirs des citoyens.

La semaine dernière, l'Ontario a augmenté encore une fois le seuil d'admissibilité de l'aide juridique de 6 %. C'était la troisième augmentation de 6 % depuis trois ans. Ensemble, ces trois augmentations permettront à 400 000 Ontariens de plus d'accéder à l'aide juridique. Lorsque cette augmentation de 6 % sera en place, un million de citoyens à faible revenu de plus se qualifieront pour l'aide juridique.

Monsieur le Président, l'amélioration des services juridiques pour les Ontariens les plus vulnérables fait partie des efforts de notre gouvernement pour créer un système de justice plus juste et plus accessible pour les Ontariens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd like to thank the minister for her response. I'm thrilled to hear that close to half a million Ontarians will benefit from our government's commitment to legal aid.

Like the minister said, access to justice should be determined by need, not by income. Access to legal services improves outcomes in a number of ways for not only the individuals affected but also for the system as a whole. By helping to reduce the number of under-represented parties in court, the justice system becomes more efficient and more cost-effective.

Could the minister please expand on her current efforts to increase justice for our most vulnerable Ontarians?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci encore au député d'Etoibicoke-Centre.

This government is deeply committed to expanding access to legal services for low-income Ontarians. This year's investment amounts to nearly \$50 million. This government has invested over \$3 billion in Legal Aid Ontario since 2003.

Legal Aid Ontario offers a wide range of legal services to low-income Ontarians and is one of the most comprehensive legal aid systems in Canada. Through this funding, close to half a million more low-income Ontarians will have access to legal aid services.

I'm very proud of this government's efforts on behalf of the province's most vulnerable, and I am committed to

continuing to work with Legal Aid Ontario to ensure that our justice system meets the needs of everyone in this province.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the environment minister. Yesterday, the Financial Accountability Officer testified before committee that he is becoming increasingly concerned with this government's lack of transparency, and he issued a warning. Things are only going to get worse. In fact, he reported that he would likely be unable to access government documents that detail projects receiving money from the Liberals' cap-and-trade slush fund.

With this government's record of scandal and secret fundraisers, we know the Liberals cannot be trusted with such a secretive scheme.

Will the minister explain why the Liberals are restricting the ability of the Financial Accountability Officer to investigate their cap-and-trade slush fund?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to offer a caution on the use of words that imply that there are monies available to do different things. It shall not be used in the supplementary, and if it is, I'll stop the question.

Carry on.

1130

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think you'd be hard pressed to find, certainly in any jurisdiction managing cap-and-trade and, quite frankly, in most aspects of the public sector in Canada, money that has to be so accounted for.

First, the money has to be entered into a dedicated account, which can be reviewed by the parliamentary budget officer, the Auditor General, the Environmental Commissioner and many other officers, including members of the House.

As it's expended, it has to be accounted for. Every single project has to have the dollar amount—the cost per millions of dollars of GHG emissions reduced. It has to be aligned with the five-year action plan. We have to file an investment plan that does it every year. It is reviewed by my ministry, when separately evaluated, and then reviewed by the Treasury Board and cabinet.

Could the member suggest any other reviews, or what higher standard? It is higher than Quebec, higher than California, higher than Japan and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I just did: Financial Accountability Officer access.

Again, back to the minister: The Liberals are forging ahead with their plan to impose a new tax on gasoline and home heating, but they don't want to explain the details to the Financial Accountability Officer.

Instead, behind the cloak of cabinet secrecy, the Liberals plan to funnel \$1.9 billion into their cap-and-trade discretionary fund so they can dole out more cash for—you guessed it—their pet projects like more renewable energy.

The minister is restricting the Financial Accountability Officer's access so the government can hide their discretionary funding to companies that attend the Liberals' high-value, \$6,000-a-plate fundraisers.

Is this truly what's happening? Can the minister address this? Yes or no?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I work very closely with the Environmental Commissioner. I chatted with her on the phone this week. We work very closely with the parliamentary budget officer.

The parliamentary budget officer has to review all spending plans before they're done and has very broad powers. The parliamentary budget officer has not asked me nor, I believe, asked this government for additional powers. I continually talk to the officers of this Legislature. We are performing at a higher standard than any other.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little confused by the member opposite. The member opposite this morning announced that she wanted to cancel vehicle emissions testing in Ontario so we can't test vehicles for emissions. The member opposite—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's almost wrap-up, but the member from Huron-Bruce, please.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member opposite and her party voted against the cap-and-trade bill with the higher standards. The member opposite has yet to propose a single idea on how to improve transparency, and the reason for that is because we're exceeding all international standards—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question today is to the Minister of Transportation. Ontario's private winter road maintenance contracts extend only to March 31, but last week there was a major snowfall and more plowing was needed. So the contractors got more work and more money even though the government is still trying to collect performance penalties from these same contractors. The government thought the best solution was to hire a company they have already levied fines against for not doing the job properly.

Why are the taxpayers of Ontario giving these private contractors even more work and more money when they still owe millions in penalties for the work they failed to do in the first place?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for the question.

A couple of things to remember about our highway maintenance contracts: They are not season-by-season; they are, in fact, year-round contracts. The contractors have a particular contract area, including, for example, the area contract that would cover Niagara Falls. It's a year-round contract.

Specifically, with respect to the equipment complement that's required for winter maintenance: In some parts of the province, including parts of southern Ontario, as of April 1—and this is not new—our contractors in a given area are permitted to actually reduce the complement of equipment that they provide. As of April 1, it would come down to 50%.

Of course, everyone here knows, because I say it repeatedly—and I think this is true of all of us in this Legislature—making sure that our roads and our highways are safe at all times is extremely important. That's why MTO, recognizing the weather forecast had existed prior to March 31 or prior to that last snowfall, reached out to our contractors to make sure that we could be in a position to provide the service that your constituents want, that my constituents want and that the people—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late to get a warning.

Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: On the Niagara Falls contractors, as you're aware, they didn't perform their job last year and they have moved on. Long-term contracts are a whole other issue.

Back to the Minister of Transportation: The government has entrusted the safety of our roads to private contractors but is unable to enforce these contracts. Even though these contractors owe the public millions in penalties for poor performance, instead of forcing them to honour the agreements, these contractors get more work.

The minister is stubbornly sticking with his failed privatization system when these millions of dollars in penalties prove that these contractors can't be trusted to do their jobs and keep our roads safe—which is probably the most important thing to this. Why does he insist on sticking with a failed privatized system that endangers our kids and our grandkids?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank the member, who is my critic, for his follow-up question. Based on the way that the question was conveyed just a moment ago, it sounds to me like there's a little bit of a fundamental misunderstanding on that member's part with respect to how our contracts work.

Having said that, everybody here knows that my number one priority is to make sure that Ontario's roads and highways remain as safe as they've been for the last 13 years, ranking first or second across all North American jurisdictions for safety.

That's why the Ministry of Transportation reached out to the contractors in question to make sure, given that we all knew what the weather forecast was, that we had the equipment necessary to provide that level of safety for the people of Niagara, for the people of Vaughan and for the people of Ontario.

We'll continue to work closely with our contractors. We'll continue to implement our action plan, following up on the Auditor General's recommendations from her

report months ago. We'll continue to move forward and improve the program, and I would expect all members on all sides can support that.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. On this side of the House we know the importance, and we understand that climate change is not a distant threat to Ontario.

It is an issue I hear a lot about in my riding of Trinity-Spadina. It has devastated communities, damaged homes, businesses and crops, and increased insurance rates. That is why our government is moving forward with a plan to implement a cap-and-trade program in Ontario. It is clear that a cap-and-trade system is the best method for Ontario to reduce GHGs while simultaneously growing our economy.

I understand that our government's public discussion and consultation on cap-and-trade goes back almost a decade. Can the minister please inform the House of what our government has done over the last decade to consult and prepare for cap-and-trade?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I've said a few times that probably the two things that have been most studied in science by human beings are cancer and climate change. There have never been two larger research initiatives, really, in human history.

When our government sees our first auction, with the Legislature of Ontario willingly passing the bill in early 2017, that will celebrate a decade of working on cap-and-trade and carbon financing.

We actually started in 2007 when we joined the Western Climate Initiative and founded what really became the first successful large-scale carbon market. We launched our first cap-and-trade consultations in 2008 in a discussion paper, the first of four discussion papers that we've issued over the last decade.

I will continue in the supplementary, but we work on a weekly basis with environmental groups, consumer groups and industry, drafting this legislation with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the minister for his very important work on the cap-and-trade program.

Coming out of the United Nations conference in Paris last December, I believe there's real momentum in reducing greenhouse gas. Ontario is about to join a global movement towards putting a price on carbon, and it is most effective to be an early adopter. Soon, more than 90% of the Canadian population will be covered by a carbon price. In Ontario, our proposed cap-and-trade will limit pollution, reward innovative companies and create more opportunities for investment in Ontario.

Can the minister please inform the House as to the recent consultations with stakeholders and industry that were undertaken?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for Trinity-Spadina, who is my next-door neighbour in the Legislature here, for his leadership. Those of us who

are parents or grandparents fully understand the weight of these issues.

This is an incredible trading opportunity. As you know, we're creating a free-standing marketplace in which there is bidding and allowances. The consultation with financial experts and legal experts is to create this so that it has integrity and the trading happens without fear or favour, based on establishing a real price on carbon sufficient to reduce emissions.

It also involves all Ontarians, all Ontario consumers and businesses, because the pricing system creates opportunities for trade and investment and puts a price on pollution, but it also stimulates investment. So our consultation has to be very detailed.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Huron–Bruce has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, concerning the Financial Accountability Officer's access to cap-and-trade funds. This matter will be debated—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to make sure everyone understands what a late show is.

This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on a point of order.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please join me in welcoming the consul general of Turkey, Mr. Erdeniz Şen, sitting in the members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just a reminder that Kelly Semkiw and Caleb Ellis are here with their Jersey of Courage. We'll be able to sign the jersey outside the main doors, and it's to make sure that we have a safe workplace in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEEMAN'S

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to rise today and extend some congratulations to Heeman's, an award-winning agri-business in Thorndale. They achieved the 2016 Business Achievement Award at the London Chamber of Commerce last week.

Every year, the London Chamber of Commerce Business Achievement Award celebrates the best and brightest of the London business community. The agri-

business award recognizes a local business that demonstrates strong achievements in several areas, including environmental responsibility, business strategy, innovation, financial management, employee relations, sustainability, employee training and development, and the business's commitment to the community.

Heeman's is a third-generation family-operated garden and berry centre that has been around since 1963. Aside from offering excellent service and succeeding in business, the Heeman family are strong supporters of the community. I enjoy Will Heeman at the many events he emcees in Thorndale, although I'm always tentative when he's emceeing the election debates.

I have had the opportunity to visit Heeman's on many different occasions to tour, and two years ago I helped celebrate their 50th year of business. Agriculture businesses are the silent drivers of Ontario's economy, and I'm proud to represent a largely rural riding. As a community, we must continue to support small businesses like Heeman's and keep our local economy strong.

Once again, I would like to extend my sincerest congratulations to the Heeman family on their award.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to take a moment to share the story of one of my constituents and friends.

"Imagine that your child cannot look you in the eye, wave hello or tell you he loves you. He has difficulty sleeping and often wakes in the night crying but can't tell you why. When he is sick or in pain, he can't describe what hurts. He gets upset at seemingly random changes in his environment, sometimes to the point of sobbing uncontrollably, but can't express the reason. You love him beyond words yet you feel helpless."

These are the words of Dr. Janet McLaughlin, a resident in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, whose son has been diagnosed with autism. Janet's son had waited three years for intensive behaviour therapy and is now one of the many who will no longer have the option of getting the therapy this government promised, because he is over the age of five.

This government offered those families who are being cut off from the program just \$8,000 as compensation, when a year of therapy costs upwards of \$50,000. There are 16,000 children in this province waiting for intensive behaviour therapy or applied behaviour analysis, the therapies they so desperately need. For these families, this is a very emotional betrayal of trust.

We ask on their behalf for this Liberal government to grandfather the thousands of children who have waited to turn five and honour their commitment of IBI therapy, which provides hope for so many families.

KATYN MASSACRE AND SMOLENSK AIR DISASTER

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: As a Polish Canadian, I'm honoured to rise in the House to commemorate the 76th

anniversary of the Katyn massacre and the sixth anniversary of the Smolensk air disaster.

For the people of Poland, Katyn is an example of the criminal acts of the Soviet system against the Polish nation. In April and May of 1940, more than 20,000 Polish nationals were murdered. This decimated the ranks of the Polish military ruling class and intelligentsia.

Every year at this time, I remember my two great-uncles who were murdered in Katyn. Their loss reminds me of the horrors of war and the price of intolerance and aggression. I think that remembering acts like this should strengthen Canadians' resolve against all forms of hatred and reinforce our commitment to respect and peace.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to remember the 96 people, including Polish President Lech Kaczyński, his wife and high-ranking officials, who were lost in the Smolensk air disaster in 2010. This disaster happened as the president and government officials were en route to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre. The airliner crashed short of the airport's runway near Smolensk after hitting trees in heavy fog.

Both the Katyn massacre and Smolensk air disaster are two terrible tragedies which will forever be linked together. This weekend, I am proud to join members of Polonia at Toronto's Canadian Polish Congress commemoration event. I'd like to thank them in advance for organizing this event, where we remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their families and country.

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

Mr. Ted Arnott: On March 18, I met with representatives from Wilfrid Laurier University, including its president, Dr. Max Blouw, to discuss Laurier's proposal for a new campus in Milton.

For over 100 years, Laurier has been providing high-quality post-secondary education and showing the way with partnerships with community colleges and other universities. Today, it is one of Canada's fastest-growing universities.

Laurier's vision of a 400-acre Milton Education Village would be a purpose-built, fully integrated urban community of education, research and commercialization, with complementary residential and commercial development and amenities.

A new Laurier campus in Milton would go a long way towards improving access to post-secondary education in our area. As a neighbouring community to the town of Halton Hills, Milton is also located close to Guelph and Wellington county, Burlington, Oakville, Mississauga, Brampton and Hamilton.

Milton is the fastest-growing municipality in Canada. But not only is Milton growing; the entire region is experiencing enormous growth. The population of Halton region is expected to exceed one million people by 2041, underscoring the need for new, local post-secondary education opportunities. What better place to locate a new university campus?

The region of Halton recently identified the Laurier Milton campus as one of its top priorities for provincial

government action, as I pointed out in this House on February 24. I understand that the town of Halton Hills council is very enthusiastic as well.

As a Laurier alumnus, I share their excitement and fully support their proposal, and I urge the government to get behind it as well.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier once said, "Let them look to the past, but let them also look to the future. Let them look to the land of their ancestors, and let them also look also to the future; let them look to the land of their ancestors, but let them look also to the land of their children."

Let us heed Laurier's exhortation. Let us remember our children, let us look to the future and let us work together to build this new campus.

NIAGARA PARKS SCHOOL OF HORTICULTURE

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for allowing me to rise today. Over the weekend, I had the privilege of attending the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture graduation alongside the students, their families, and representatives from the Niagara Parks Commission, along with Chairperson Janice Thomson.

The Niagara Parks School of Horticulture is one of the best programs of its type in the country, and this class of graduates will be proving that in the years to come. The students who go to the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture are an incredible group of young people. Over the course of three years, these students get the education that allows them to work on attractions that millions of people every year come to see. By the end of their schooling, these students are ready and able to work. All across the world, these students are able to walk into jobs straight out of graduation.

1310

Niagara has some of the most beautiful sights to see, and our world-class tourism industry helps to showcase that. The experience the students at Niagara Parks School of Horticulture get from working on these attractions is one of a kind. Only in Niagara do you get to work on world-class attractions as part of your school year. I'm actually a little bit jealous.

To the families of the students and to the teachers, I want to say congratulations on what you've helped them achieve. To the students: I'd like to congratulate them on a job well done and wish them the very best in this exciting next step.

OPENING MINDS THROUGH ART

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share with you and members of this House information of a very unique program being offered at Trinity Village, a long-term-care facility in Kitchener. Opening Minds through Art is an intergenerational art program for seniors with dementia and run by 12 trained volunteers, many of them local high school students.

Seniors and volunteers are teamed up one-on-one, and over time they build a relationship as these seniors dabble

in painting. After a six-week session, their creations are featured in a gallery exhibition at the museum in downtown Kitchener. This program promotes engagement, autonomy and the dignity of people living with dementia.

At this event, I heard some really incredible personal stories of how this program has made a dramatic impact on people's lives. One person with dementia started speaking for the first time in years, after taking the art classes. Another had reverted back to her mother tongue of Spanish, but managed to regain her ability to speak English again after these classes.

The program instructor told me that people living with advanced dementia have very few choices that they get to make during the day. Other people decide when they eat, when they sleep and when they bathe, but programs like this give those seniors some choices, from the size of paper that they use to the colours that they choose to paint with.

I'm pleased the Opening Minds through Art program at Trinity Village has been able to make such progress, and thanks to the generosity of volunteers in Kitchener Centre.

JUNE FLEMING

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in the House today in remembrance of Ms. June Fleming of Magnetawan. June passed on Monday, March 28, 2016, in her 91st year. I want to honour June today as a loving daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend to all.

June was a selfless, unsalaried ambassador for her church and her community. Alongside her family, June dedicated her life to Trinity United Church. It was very special to her, as she was baptized, confirmed and married in the church. June served as president of the United Church women's organization, sat on the board of stewards, founded the music group and was the organist for more than 45 years.

June's legacy as a successful businesswoman will live on for many years to come. Taking over the family business in 1964, June successfully ran her restaurant, June's, for more than 40 years. A landmark in Magnetawan, June's was a warm, welcoming place for both full-time and summer residents alike. June never refused a meal to anyone. She would lovingly take in less-fortunate community members, providing them with hot meals any time without charge.

In June's retirement at Muskoka Landing retirement home, she was awarded the Making a Difference Award and volunteered to organize entertainment for residents within the home.

June had a reputation that extended far beyond Magnetawan. She left a lasting impression on everyone she met, including myself. She will be greatly missed by all.

REACH OUT CENTRE FOR KIDS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today and speak about a tremendous organization that is doing

important work across Halton and surrounding communities. The Reach Out Centre for Kids, or ROCK, delivers much-needed mental health services and programs to children and youth who are experiencing emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties.

Statistics show that approximately one in five children and youth in Ontario will face mental health challenges. That's a lot of kids, and they will benefit greatly from the help that ROCK provides. ROCK offers access, access to highly trained health and wellness professionals that can give kids the tools they need to deal with their mental health challenges head-on and thrive in their communities.

Recently, I had the pleasure of joining the member from Oakville to announce additional funding of \$230,000 per year. With this funding, ROCK plans to create two new walk-in clinics and hire four additional mental health workers. This means more children in Halton will have access to the right programs and services for their needs.

I've also had the pleasure of touring ROCK facilities in both Oakville and Milton, where I got a first-hand look at some of the incredible work that they're doing. It's wonderful to see how they are able to positively impact the lives of children and youth in my own riding.

ROCK is a leading agency for mental health services for children and is an excellent example of the amazing support services that are out there for kids. I'm proud our government is supporting this vital organization.

REFUGEES

Mr. John Fraser: Earlier this week, thanks to the member from Etobicoke North, we were able to welcome Syrian refugees here in the Legislative Assembly. It was a very proud moment. It was a great moment for them to be here and see how our Legislature works and how our government works.

Last weekend, I had the pleasure, in my community of Ottawa South that's home to many, many new Syrian refugee families, to celebrate and welcome them to Canada. This was put on by the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, or OCISO, as we know it. It was a wonderful event. There were hundreds of children there. It really was quite special. I was glad to be joined by my federal counterpart, David McGuinty, and the local councillor, Riley Brockington. It was really a very truly moving event.

I also want to take this time to thank the class of Featherston school who collected thousands of toys for families. This project was led by their teacher, Mr. Janna, who is really quite an incredible educator and has done a great deal to raise the social consciousness of his students at their elementary school at Featherston. I want to thank them for their work and congratulate them, and of course welcome all refugees to our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank all members for their statements.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough—Agincourt, on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: I've got a couple of guests visiting Queen's Park this afternoon, starting with my legislative assistant, Jane Liang; and my staff and constituency office: Jo-Anne Linton, my executive assistant; June Ong; Sam Wong; and Lynn Lui. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, on a point of order.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I am pleased to rise to welcome students and teachers from Epsom and Greenbank public schools. They're from Scugog in my riding. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Of course, that's not a point of order, but we always welcome our guests to be here.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 173, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend various statutes / Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 9, 2016, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Ms. DiNovo from the Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60, your committee has selected the estimates 2016-17 of the following ministries and offices for consideration: Ministry of Finance, seven hours and 30 minutes; Ministry of Transportation, seven hours and 30 minutes; Ministry of Health and Long-term Care—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard a no. Carry on.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, 15 hours; Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 15 hours—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense. I didn't hear a no.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to do those things; that's part of the rules. I can't break the rules.

1320

PETITIONS

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Lorne Coe: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs;

"Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

"Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

"Whereas freezing student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind; and

"Whereas this situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential."

I'll affix my signature, as I agree with the content of this petition, and I gladly provide it to Diluk.

PERSONS WITH COMMUNICATION
DISABILITIES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all government offices and organizations must be obligated to assist and accommodate persons with communication disabilities;

“Whereas a public system should be established to assist persons with communication disabilities, so that they can access public services, private businesses, and government organizations;

“Whereas legal aid should cover human rights and civil matters. Persons with communication disabilities are more vulnerable, more likely to experience discrimination, and more likely to live in poverty and require legal assistance;

“Whereas private businesses cannot make victims of anyone, particularly those with communication disabilities. Presently there is no protection for them, and they are continually taken advantage of;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“A public system must be established to assist persons with communication disabilities through legislation. The legislation must be written to hold accountability at all levels of service to assist or guide the communication-disabled with the help of a public system of experts. Advocacy for people with disabilities makes for a better society, one that makes room for everyone.”

I’m going to sign this. I give it to Sabrina to be delivered to the table.

CAREGIVERS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations.

“Whereas there are over 2.6 million caregivers to a family member, a friend or a neighbour in Ontario;

“Whereas these caregivers work hard to provide care to those that are most in need even though their efforts are often overlooked;

“Whereas one third of informal caregivers are distressed, which is twice as many as four years ago;

“Whereas without these caregivers, the health care system and patients would greatly suffer in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP Gélinas’s bill to proclaim the first Tuesday of every April as Family Caregiver Day to increase recognition and awareness of family caregivers in Ontario.”

I agree with this, I will affix my name to it and send it with page Joshua.

PRÉPOSÉS AUX SERVICES DE SOUTIEN PERSONNEL

M^{me} Gila Martow: J’ai une pétition adressée à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario.

« Attendu que les préposés aux services de soutien personnel sont le plus grand groupe de travailleurs de la santé non réglementé au Canada; et

« Attendu que les PSSP prennent soin des citoyens les plus vulnérables, y compris les personnes âgées en soins de longue durée, soignées à la maison, dans les hôpitaux et les maisons de retraite, et les adultes handicapés dans les logements supervisés; et

« Attendu que les PSSP sont de plus en plus en demande et ils sont un élément clé d’un système de santé durable; et

« Attendu que les PSSP ne possèdent pas de curriculum, de champ de pratique ou de normes de pratique; et

« Attendu que les PSSP doivent effectuer une des tâches les plus importantes dans les soins de santé sans les outils appropriés;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario la pétition suivante :

« De désigner les préposés aux services de soutien personnel comme une profession de la santé réglementée et de promulguer la législation appropriée. »

Je vais la signer et la donner au page Sohan.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I’m going to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your recent appointment to that chair.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ojibway Prairie Complex is a five-park system totalling 332 hectares. It represents half of the city of Windsor’s remaining natural areas;

“Whereas Ojibway has 160 species at risk—over 20% and 32% for Ontario and Canada’s species at risk respectively. It represents Canada’s, and the world’s, most endangered ecosystem;

“Whereas over 4,000 species live on the site—over 700 plant types (100 are rare ...), over 3,000 insects, 233 bird species with breeding evidence for 71 species, and 16 mammals;

“Whereas Ojibway Park and the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve (OPPNR) are two of the parks in the complex adjacent to the proposed development. These parks are: (1) designated as natural heritage, environmentally significant areas, and in the case of the OPPNR, a provincially significant wetland ... and an area of natural and scientific interest...; (2) protect biodiversity by hosting: eight endangered and 12 threatened species in Canada;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To designate this land with provincial importance and prevent any development on or adjacent to this land, so that the land will be protected and so too will the 91 species at risk, including six endangered and 12 threatened species on schedule 1 of the Endangered Species Act.”

I fully agree. I’ll sign my name and give it to my buddy Jack to bring up to the front.

LUNG HEALTH

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this petition. I am affixing my signature and giving it to page Deanna.

1330

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

"Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can't afford to pay more;

"Whereas Ontario's businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

"Whereas the recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

"Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff

(FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

Madam Speaker, I have affixed my signature as well to this petition, as I support it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Cindy Forster: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the decision to close the Welland general hospital was made without consultation with the residents of south Niagara, and without regard for potential social and economic impacts of this closure; and

"Whereas the recommendations to the government contained in Dr. Kevin Smith's report on restructuring of the Niagara Health System included no evidence to support the closure of the Welland general hospital; no needs assessment for the residents of south Niagara; no costing of the entire restructuring plan; and no proposals to mitigate the impact of reduced hospital access;

"Whereas the catchment area of the Welland general hospital includes four municipalities, with a population of over 90,000, including a high percentage (+25%) of seniors and people living in poverty;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Stop the planned closure of the Welland general hospital;

"(2) Conduct a proper third-party evidence-based study to assess the present and projected health care and hospital services requirements of residents in the catchment area of the Welland general hospital;

"(3) Hold public consultations, not only during the assessment process, but also on recommendations resulting from this study."

I support this petition and affix my signature and send it with page Madeline.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE
AND HARASSMENT

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and you do look good in the big chair.

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime. When public education about sexual violence and harassment is not prioritized, myths and attitudes informed by misogyny become prevalent. This promotes rape culture.... Sexual violence and harassment survivors too often feel revictimized by the systems set in place to support them. The voices of survivors, in all their diversity, need to be amplified...."

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment's final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change; fund sexual assault support services adequately to meet the demand for their counselling and public education programs; ... and address attrition rates within our justice system, including examining 'unfounded' cases, developing enhanced prosecution models and providing free legal advice for survivors."

Madam Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will sign it and hand it to page Harry.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to the member from York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I wanted to congratulate you on your appointment to the chair."

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

Thank you. As I have agreed with this, I'll affix my signature and give it to page Zachary.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: This petition was sent to me from Julie Ding. It says:

"Don't Balance the Budget on the Backs of Children with ASD.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention (IBI); and

"Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

"Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

"Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

"Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government;

"Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

"Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to Cooper to bring to the Clerk.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO DOWN SYNDROME DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA JOURNÉE ONTARIENNE DE LA TRISOMIE 21

Mr. Dickson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day/ Projet de loi 182, Loi proclamant la Journée ontarienne de la trisomie 21.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Dickson has moved second reading of Bill 182, an Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I guess, Madam Speaker, I was perhaps the first person to curtsy to you in the chair. So congratulations.

First of all, through you, Madam Speaker, if I may, I'd like to introduce some special guests with us in the audience today. The young lady standing up at the far left is a very special grandmother. We're going to call her Granny. We could almost call her a great-granny because she is great. That is Irene Turpie. The two other young ladies beside her are Jennifer Crowson, mother, with her son, Owen Crowson, and, next to her, Ingrid Muschta and her son, Alexander. It's good to have all of you here. Thank you very much.

I'm going to tell you who my speakers are today. Dr. Helena Jaczek, who is our Minister of Community and Social Services, is one. The representative from Durham region, MPP Granville Anderson, is another. He has been very involved in social service work for years. And in front of me is Dr. Shafiq Qaadri, the MPP for Etobicoke North—

Interjection.

Mr. Joe Dickson: He is extremely intense, and one of two doctors speaking. It goes without saying that our colleagues, PC and NDP, will have excellent presenters as well, as they always do.

It's nice that I can acknowledge a couple of people before we get into the actual Down syndrome bill. I should mention, because this has been ongoing for a number of years and finally should be cleared up today, that we've had people who have strongly supported Down Syndrome Day and support for this health issue. Current Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister McMeekin has been active on this file for many, many years through a previous ministry, and he has expertise in social events as well, so he has worked on housing for that. I thank the minister.

1340

Also, Madam Speaker, our current Minister of Agriculture, Jeff Leal, who has been active in his community for some 30 years, has just been feted there by all parties. All of us were represented there. He actually initiated the first funding for the Down Syndrome Association of Peterborough. He's done a great job.

Speaking of Peterborough, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Debbie Reid, who has been the president up there for many years, and the great assistance that she has provided to me.

Madam Speaker, on some of the challenges that our good friends with Down syndrome have faced: If they're at the poverty line, ODSP is \$865 a month or \$11,000 a year. You can't really exist on that, and we know that here. Also, when it's work employment support through the ODSP office, it sometimes takes a long time. Quite simply, if there's someone out there who has a problem, please just contact your MPP for your representative area. They know where to go and how to assist you.

School boards don't have special funding, and most families cannot afford a speech pathologist at \$150 an hour, so they're limited in what they can do.

I just have to also say that my wife, Donna, was a young registered nurse and recalls how for 50 years people were encouraged to give up Down syndrome children. They were not part of society. My, how society

has changed for the better. We now embrace all children, as we should, and we should do it even more.

In Ajax, there is ARC Industries, which has a lot of work provided for mentally challenged people. I can tell you, having spoken to them on many occasions and having taken the odd family out for lunch, that they continue to do good, and that grows on an ongoing basis.

I think at this point I'd maybe like to just briefly mention some of the challenges that are there, and then I will—I don't think I actually read off which doctors were going to be here, or did I? Yes, I did. I did mention them.

Down syndrome is known as trisomy 21, a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement in which a person has three copies of the 21st chromosome. Approximately one in 800 babies are born in Ontario with Down syndrome.

People with Down syndrome experience varying degrees of intellectual delays and lower muscle tone. Some people with Down syndrome can experience cardiovascular and gastrointestinal difficulties, usually in the first year of life. Having two doctors speaking to this today, they may wish to expand on that.

But further, people with Down syndrome have faced discrimination in Ontario and around the world. Half a century ago, people with Down syndrome were denied the right to an education, were given inadequate health care and were placed in institutions where their life expectancy was approximately 25 years. People with Down syndrome are people first and share the same human rights as every other citizen in Ontario. They should be persons first and share the same human rights with every other person in Ontario.

Advances in medicine and social movements challenging discrimination have improved the life experiences and expectancy of people with Down syndrome. People with Down syndrome are now living into their sixties and seventies. People with Down syndrome are active, contributing citizens of the province of Ontario. Children with Down syndrome are attending mainstream schools and are learning to read and write alongside their peers. Young adults with Down syndrome are attending college and living independently, and some are gainfully employed.

At this point I'd just also like to mention another family friend of ours who had an infant son with Down syndrome. I know the family personally. It was many years back. In those days—as I indicated just previously—many decades ago, parents were encouraged to have their child in an institution.

These parents with several children that I know kept their son and the other son that they had. The parents loved and treated Howie warmly for all of his life. He lived to be age 56. He died 10 and a half years ago. I remember him as a very special friend. He changed the entire family. The entire family belonged to Howie, and he belonged to them.

I wish I had the time to tell you a story—he comes from a family rich in hockey talent, out of Oshawa. I can't tell the story because it would take too long, but Howie, who had Down syndrome, was caught by the TV

cameras the night that Bobby Orr and the Boston Bruins won the Stanley Cup because one of Howie's brothers just happened to be the captain of the Boston Bruins. Howie wouldn't give up the Stanley Cup. I'll save that story for another day, but it's just a precious moment when Bobby Orr has him on his knee and they don't want to part. Bobby was a good friend of their family as well.

I met a very special lady—my gosh, where does the time go? I met a very special lady by the name of Katherine. I spent an evening with her and her mother. Her nickname is Kassy. Her loving parents are Donna and Bruce. Kassy has two giant brothers. Her puppy is Tasha, a Maltese-Shih Tzu breed. Kassy just graduated from Clarington high school in November—grade 12. She's very active in learning; she never stops. She has taken leadership training; financial training, referenced as Money Math; and the life lunches program, where you work with other students and help them. She has many great friends. She loves working with children, particularly Community Living employment support. She has first aid, CPR—I could go on for ever and ever; she actually skis. She skis at Brimacombe. I have to tell you, once you spend some quality time with that child—she's a young lady now—you appreciate how great they are and how special they are to all of us. It was an honour for me to be with Kassy and her mother.

Some of the other numbers that are very important out there are the number of babies that are born with Down syndrome universally across racial and gender lines, and that's one in every 800 babies. The average IQ of a young adult with Down syndrome is 50, equivalent to the mental age of an eight-to-nine-year-old child. As you know, adults are generally in the range IQ-wise of 110 to 120.

There is no cure for Down syndrome. We need education, proper care and awareness to show improvement in quality of life. According to the Canadian Down Syndrome Society, people with Down syndrome are now living well beyond 55; they're completing high school, getting better jobs—skillful jobs—and gaining meaningful employment. The goal is to dispel myths, raise awareness and recognize the contributions that people with Down syndrome make in our communities.

Further down the road: November 1 to 7 is National Down Syndrome Awareness Week. I've already asked my staff to commence working on that, pursuing any way that we could help to promote that. If that was the case—if possible—I would then approach the two opposition parties and ask them to co-author a bill so it would be that much quicker and more appropriate. It would be totally representative of this House.

Something I should mention is that during National Down Syndrome Awareness Week there's a Go21 walk held across Canada. It's significant because people with Down syndrome have that extra chromosome on the 21st chromosome, and "Go, go, go" is part of their cheer, cheering people on and raising awareness absolutely everywhere.

The very last thing I think I'll say, Madam Speaker, is that I've heard different mothers and fathers speak. I've

listened to them. One of them in particular said to me, "We'll eat macaroni and cheese for the rest of our lives so it will allow for extra money for health care, for the protection and care of our special child"—loving care from very special parents. We should never forget that.

1350

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Whitby—Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations as well.

I add my name in support of Bill 182, An Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day.

March 21 will become, I would hope, the catalyst for continuing discussion and improving the depth of dialogue and the necessary services and support of this condition. What's clear is that in my lifetime, the understanding has changed so much, but we still have such a long way to go. Decades ago, it was not uncommon for families to protect children with this syndrome, but we've advanced so much, haven't we, Speaker?

Today, as they should, children with this syndrome attend school, play a part in the decisions that affect them, work, vote and contribute to society in a host of ways. Yet there remain many challenges that still need to be addressed.

As an example, special services at home: Families can receive funding when their children are under 18, but those services end on an individual's 18th birthday. Families must then apply for new funding through the Passport program, which still has wait-lists. Some children with Down syndrome may require extra supports at school, but the special education funding formula is not meeting the requirements of special-needs students, and educational assistants have been let go across provincial school boards, as an example.

My good friend Mark Wafer, a resident of my riding of Whitby—Oshawa, for many years has played a significant role as a workplace disability agent. Mark owns several Tim Hortons stores in the GTA. Currently, over 20% of his employees have disabilities. In fact, his longest-serving employee has Down syndrome. Mark describes him often as his best employee.

I'd like to also talk about research. The research is clear that people with Down syndrome benefit from early, coordinated, inclusive and targeted interventions to support their development and foster success. Furthermore, where children and adults with Down syndrome or other disabilities are given opportunities to participate, all children and adults benefit in the environment of friendship, acceptance and respect for everyone, and high expectations are created.

Going forward, this particular motion and bill, as it speaks to this special day, I think speaks to what we, as a party, are looking for with respect to the types of supports for children with Down syndrome. This is a disorder, not a disease. Let's support those who have the syndrome by proclaiming March 21 as Ontario Down Syndrome Day. I look forward to further discussion with my colleague opposite on his suggestions in terms of the co-sponsoring of a bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this bill today, Bill 182, the Ontario Down Syndrome Day Act, 2016. The bill is long overdue, and recognizing this day is very important for those who have Down syndrome, their families and their communities. I think that it will help to reduce—reverse, hopefully—some of the negative attitudes, discrimination and social exclusions that people actually suffer.

I wanted to tell a quick story; I've only got a couple of minutes. Our guests here today probably saw, if they saw the Toronto Sun or the Niagara papers this week, a young man in my community, Tony Yorfido. He is a huge fan of Steven Tyler, formerly from Aerosmith. Anthony is from Welland. He happened to be in Niagara Falls and they were in a store. Steven Tyler was going to be playing at Casino Niagara. And who walked into the store but Steven Tyler, so the mother and Anthony made their way over to Steven Tyler to get their pictures taken.

He found out that he didn't have tickets and invited him to actually come backstage, get up on the stage, and play the maracas during a song. Certainly that's the kind of inclusion that we need to see in our communities.

I also wanted to talk about the local Casa Dante Lodge 19 in my riding that does a lot of work supporting Special Olympics in Niagara. Every Friday night, they use their hall to hold dances for the Special Olympics so that they can raise money for the young people to participate in a lot of sporting activities. I can tell you that I've been to many a dance and I've played many a bocce ball game as well over the years, trying to do my bit in supporting that group of people.

Interestingly enough, when we were doing a little research for this bill, we also found out that there is an increasing number of Down syndrome children with autism. We've been talking about autism here in the Legislature. Unfortunately, it's a little harder to diagnose, but I'm sure that some of my colleagues will want to weigh in on that piece.

I just want to shout out to a couple of other agencies in Niagara. The Pathstone Mental Health facility does a great job. Community Living Welland Pelham, as well as Bethesda—all great, non-profit community agencies that actually support people with Down syndrome who have dual diagnoses or support them at Community Living with all kinds of life activities and social activities.

It's a pleasure to have had the opportunity to say a few words. I totally support this bill, as I'm sure everyone will here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, and it's a real pleasure to see you in the chair for the first time.

I also want to thank the member for Ajax-Pickering for bringing this bill forward to shine a light on those with Down syndrome. Of course, it is one of many developmental disabilities, but perhaps it's one of the

most recognizable in terms of the appearance of people with Down syndrome and I think a very well-known genetic background to it.

We have seen a real transformation in our society in terms of our approach to those with developmental disabilities. When I graduated from medical school in the mid-1970s, I can truly say that society was very divided. At that point in time, there were still individuals with Down syndrome being institutionalized, whose parents felt they couldn't cope and felt that this was their only alternative. But at the same time, it was the beginning of the growth of the Community Living movement. In those days, 50 or 40 years ago, there was growing awareness of the abilities of those with Down syndrome, so instead of focusing on the developmental disabilities side, there was focus on the abilities of these individuals.

That is certainly the way our government and my ministry with responsibility for those with developmental responsibilities view all individuals in society. We are trying to ensure that we have the most inclusive society that we possibly can. To this end, we have closed the institutions that existed here in this province for those with developmental disabilities. We've established, to the extent possible, independent living, perhaps with some support. We know that parents, caregivers, extended families of those with Down syndrome are often very anxious about the future. As has been referenced, those with developmental disabilities are living longer, thanks to modern medicine and all the interventions that have occurred over the past few decades.

Independent living with some supports is an ideal. As we know with those with Down syndrome, there is a spectrum of severity of certain conditions, health conditions, intellectual ability and so on, just as there is with the rest of us. Therefore, in some cases, we need group homes and some specialized support for these individuals.

In terms of what I've seen since I became minister, the next frontier is employment. We know that so many with developmental disabilities are fully able to participate in the competitive workforce. It is not only for the potential remuneration that we encourage employment; it is to be part of society. It's to be part of what everyone wants to be, to have a job, a home and a friend. This is the philosophy of our ministry. I'm delighted that the member has put this private member's bill forward, and I will be fully supporting it.

1400

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on the member from Ajax-Pickering—his private member's bill, Ontario Down Syndrome Day Act.

It's just so interesting to hear some of the different personalities and the different experiences that people bring to the debates here in the House. I, myself, was an optometrist, whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services just spoke about her career in medicine. We both had many patients with Down syndrome or

patients who had family members with Down syndrome, and I can attest to the fact that there is a wide range of different abilities and personalities. I think a sunny disposition is a great way to describe some of the patients that I saw with Down syndrome, but not necessarily all of them.

There's no cure, as the member from Ajax-Pickering said, because it's not a disease. There's no reason to even look for a cure. It's not a disease; it's a genetic chromosomal anomaly, as I would say. Often, people like to use the word "defect." I do not.

As the minister said, all of us have different abilities and different interests. In a way, it's just more people in society who often might have some challenges, both physical and intellectual, but that's no different from the rest of us and our family members and friends and constituents.

I just want to touch a little bit on all the fantastic success stories that are out there of people with Down syndrome. One of them that comes to mind so quickly for me and my daughter, who loved to watch the TV series *Glee*, of course, is the very well-known Lauren Potter, who played the Cheerios's co-captain on the show. She was an integral part of the show. It was just wonderful to see her playing that part and having some of the really witty acting lines. Jamie Brewer is another American actress with Down syndrome who played in the television series *American Horror Story*. She is also one of the first known Down syndrome models to walk down at New York Fashion Week.

I just want to touch a little bit on the story of Tim Harris. Tim is the owner of his own restaurant called Tim's Place. In high school, he was elected homecoming king by the highest margin of votes in the school's history. Obviously, Tim has Down syndrome, and that's why I'm talking about him today. He was also named student of the year. What a fantastic school and faculty that must have been.

He dreamed of owning a restaurant, so he found jobs in the industry and learned as much as he could. One restaurant he worked at, the Red Robin, said that the revenues would absolutely skyrocket on Tim's shifts. I saw a TV show where they told the story of Tim, and you could see why. Everybody who came into the restaurant was giving him a hug or a joke and had a real personal connection to Tim.

He graduated from college with certificates in food services, office skills and restaurant hosting. In addition, he created Tim's Big Heart Foundation to help other people with disabilities start their own businesses.

As the minister said, the next frontier is employment. In Thornhill, we have DANI, which is Developing and Nurturing Independence. It is focused on helping individuals not necessarily just with Down syndrome but individuals who have special needs find the skills they need so that they can be independent and have employment. Their focus is on the DANI Café, which I hosted an event at recently.

Ángela Bachiller, in 2013 in Spain, became the first person with Down syndrome to be elected a council-

woman. I want to remind people that not only could you be elected when you have Down syndrome—now it's 2016—but you vote as well if you have Down syndrome or any other challenges in your life.

I think that we would certainly welcome to see pages, and maybe the parents who are listening here today—maybe that's something that we can work on, a program here. Maybe not exactly the page program, but maybe there is some kind of program that we can initiate here in the Legislature for kids who have some challenges. We have to put our money where our mouth is sometimes and practise what we preach.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker—madame la Présidente—and félicitations for being in the chair. Welcome.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. That's going to take some time for all of us to get used to.

I am pleased to be able to stand today to speak to Bill 182 and to welcome some folks from Hamilton and the Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton. Welcome to Queen's Park, and congratulations on this day.

Thank you to the member from Ajax-Pickering for bringing this bill forward. As my colleague said, it's absolutely about time that we're getting around to this. I'm thrilled, I have to say, that he has kept it at March 21, which is in line with national Down Syndrome Day. We just celebrated the 11th anniversary of national Down Syndrome Day, and I hope that everybody had the ability to rock some socks in awareness of Down syndrome, because that's definitely what this is really all about. It's about awareness. It's about where we are moving into the future.

I have to say that when I heard previous members talk about a time of segregation, it is something that I'm blessed that I don't know about. I don't know what segregation means in my own world. I'm very blessed to have a family that—I have a cousin with disabilities, and there was inclusivity. There was nothing different about my cousin. That is the way that I was raised, and this is the generation that I see happening today, and it makes me very proud to be a part of it.

I'm not going to talk about Down syndrome and what Down syndrome is. What I am going to talk about is awareness. I'm going to talk about my city of Hamilton, and the great Down syndrome walk that we have every year. It's pretty much like a carnival, for the excitement and the community and the organizations that come together. It brings extra funds in, too, for speech pathology, for other supports that families need—occupational therapy. These are things that families struggle for and that families need those extra funds for, because they're just not there. Organizations like this, and days like this, make those happen and make it better for families.

There's a national campaign that Hamilton is part of, and it's called Go21. "Go" is used to celebrate the advancement and the strength of the Down syndrome

community. The “21” is used to represent the 21st chromosome, which is the determination of the diagnosis. Great work, to the Hamilton folks for always being there. I’m really honoured to be able to participate in that event.

Being part of that event has allowed me the privilege of many new friends in my life. I have to give a huge shout-out to the Fab Five, because all of you received my Christmas card last year, and the photo was with the Fab Five. I’m going to give a huge shout-out to Ben Martin, David Colantino, Michael Mastragostino, Peter Oddi and Aaron Arnold. Thanks, guys, for always being there and being my pals. They’re fantastic.

I also have to mention a couple of other individuals who I spend a lot of time with. It’s my Hamilton skating club for the Special Olympics, and Nicole Vespa and Tim Goodale, who are two folks with Down syndrome. They participate every time there is a national event. They just came back from Newfoundland with more medals than we can count. I can’t even imagine what the bedrooms in their homes look like, with all the medals and trophies for their great work.

That’s all about integration, Speaker. That’s what this is all about. It’s about how we are making sure that everybody can participate in our society and have that wholesome experience.

I don’t have a lot of time. I really want to talk about the Montoya family and my support for them. I know this is a federal issue, where the Montoya family is being told that it’s possible they will not be able to get their citizenship here in Canada. It concerns me. Their son, Nico, has Down syndrome, and the government is saying that it could possibly be a weight on our system, so they’re going to send him home.

I’m going to finish with a quote from Rick Mercer. I’m going to be very proud to say this: My Canada deserves an extra chromosome.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It’s a pleasure to speak to this bill today, setting up Ontario Down Syndrome Day. I want to congratulate the member from Ajax. It reminds me of a friend of mine, Linda Smith, who suffered from a developmental exceptionality and passed away earlier this year. She taught me a lot of things.

1410

The reason that I like this bill is it reminds us of a lot of things, which a lot of members have said here today, our responsibilities and how families are coping. But most importantly, people with exceptionalities have an exceptional capacity for forgiveness, love and acceptance, and that’s something we can learn from them.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member for Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I also commend my colleague from Ajax–Pickering for presenting this legislation and for drawing attention to this very, very important cause. He came to me and asked me to do this, and it was indeed a pleasure and an honour to do this. Some of the folks he interviewed were from my riding of Durham,

from Courtice to be exact. I wish they were here today, but they are not. I have seen a couple of families here today that fully represent what Down syndrome is all about. I had the honour of meeting Owen and Alexander, who are two of the most adorable children you would ever want to meet. I would recommend or suggest to my colleagues that they go over and say hi to these two lovely children.

Bill 182 is An Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day, which would establish March 21 of every year as an occasion to raise awareness of trisomy 21 and of its effects on individuals and families, but also of their capacity to succeed and their potential for growth. Madam Speaker—I almost said “Mister”; I’m sorry—as a school board trustee for over 12 years, I served on SEAC because I added value to this. I know the importance of helping kids with disabilities and kids with special needs to reach their full potential, and to grow and to become wonderful, great members of our society as much as possible.

It has always been a passion of mine to make sure that our young children, especially kids with special needs, have the ability to succeed in life. That’s what this bill ought to do, and that’s what this bill will do: create awareness to that.

Many of us who work with youth know that many individuals with Down syndrome are living beyond young adulthood and well into their middle age.

I see the member from Ajax–Pickering is looking at me. I guess my time is up. I could go on about this all day.

Again, I am so grateful for the opportunity to speak to this bill. This bill has my full support.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s delightful to be in the House the day that you assume the chair.

I’m truly pleased to speak in support of Bill 182, the Ontario Down Syndrome Day Act, 2016. I’m bringing greetings on behalf of our critic Randy Pettapiece, the member from Perth–Wellington, and all of my caucus who are proud to support our good colleague Mr. Dickson from Ajax–Pickering. I know he has two sisters in Owen Sound, in my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and tells them that I’m his favourite MPP from Owen Sound. It’s only my right place to be here helping him out.

When this bill goes through, it will proclaim March 21 each year in Ontario as Ontario Down Syndrome Day. March 21 also serves as World Down Syndrome Day and will help raise awareness of what Down syndrome is, what it means to have Down syndrome and how people with Down syndrome play a vital role in our lives and communities, and also their family and friends.

From my perspective, major issues for persons with disabilities include getting a quality education, access to community-based quality residential living services, getting a meaningful job and, most importantly, being included. As my colleague just said, we welcome the 21st chromosome. It’s absolutely critical now.

In my former life, I was a recreation director and had the privilege and honour to work very closely with groups like Community Living. Many of the folks there lived with Down syndrome, and I have to tell you, they brought so much warmth and delight to our lives. They give so much to us.

I think what I want to focus on a little bit is what we need to be doing as a government to ensure that there's more of those services. Many of my critic roles have been to talk about those who need the services and programs. I just did an interview with City TV in regard to assistive devices; there was \$20 million cut from that program, which really impacts their lives. I think we should be doing more for them.

My colleague Sylvia Jones, from Dufferin-Caledon, talked about the cuts to the autism budget, which again impacts five-year-olds who have been on a waiting list, and now all of a sudden they're off that list.

There are 23,000 people on a developmental services list and about 66,000 people in Ontario with autism, Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, cerebral palsy and other intellectual disabilities. There's a lot of concern, a lot of challenges.

The unshippable.ca campaign is to raise awareness about the current residential crisis of people being shipped out of their communities because of the lack of available services. When I was community and social services critic, I had a lot of families coming, particularly the aging parents of people who needed those support services, and wondering what was going to happen when they moved on in life.

In my backyard, we had educational systems, and many of the parents came to me, very concerned. Lisa Weidner of Hanover's son Marrick has Down syndrome. I'm going to quote her: "One of my greatest fears is the lack of contained support. Marrick has just started to walk, stands at a little over three feet. He has some verbal language skills but uses signing more often. He is our pride and joy, we are confident given proper support that he will excel in school! But ... he needs that one-on-one in order to achieve all we believe is possible...."

I fought for that. I wanted to ensure that those programs and services remained there. At the end of the day, there's an urgent need to properly fund services and programs for people with developmental disabilities.

The Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs, OASIS, continues to call on the government to provide stable, increased and long-term funding to see that people get the services they need and deserve. That lack of funding will have a huge impact.

In closing, again, I'm congratulating my colleague. I think it's a wonderful initiative that he has begun. I want to do what I'm doing to support him as a catalyst. I believe it should serve as a catalyst to ensure that we discuss areas of improvement.

People with Down syndrome attend school, work, participate in decisions that affect them, have meaningful relationships, vote and contribute to society in so many wonderful ways, and I believe, truly, put a smile on our faces.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France G  linas: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your new appointment.

I will take the few minutes remaining to read into the record a letter from one of my constituents. Her name is Susan Eldridge-Vautour, and I promised her I would read this:

"Dear France:

"I am the parent of a 19-year-old son who has Down syndrome. He is a delight. I never want to be perceived as complaining about him because he has enriched our lives" so much.

"However, today I am going to complain about the lack of supports for him. As an infant and as a child, Jason received a great number of services from a variety of agencies and for that our family is grateful. As Jason approached adulthood, I began to search out his options for life beyond school. He is allowed to attend until the age of 21, which for him means he has this year and next before he 'ages out.' Initially, I thought he might attend the 'Building Bridges' program at Cambrian College.

"However, several years ago that program was discontinued. I began to look for other options and became comfortable with possibly preparing him for work at the Jarrett Resource Centre. We could get him a co-op" placement at the school he's currently attending. "It is nearby and it is a realistic option for someone with Jason's level of ability. Unfortunately, I've just learned of the expected closures of the Jarrett centres. I will be attending the information meeting ... however I'm not very optimistic.

"You may be aware that in recent months, there has been frustration expressed by parents of individuals with special needs over the decision to disqualify people with intellectual needs from riding the Handi-Transit, making that service exclusively for those with physical needs. The idea was to accommodate individuals with developmental needs within the regular transit system. Of course, no changes have been made, no services added to the regular transit system in order to serve that particular population.

1420

"As Jason approached 18, I jumped through all the necessary hoops to have him lined up for adult services. He has been on a waiting list for Passport funding ever since. This funding could pay for a special needs worker to help" Jason train for transit, for example.

"I don't think it appropriate that in less than two years, we will be faced with the possibility of leaving Jason alone at home all day to fend for himself without support, without meaningful tasks to complete, with no peers to interact with. He can watch The Big Bang Theory on TV for hours on end and find snacks while my husband and I are at work, worrying about him.

"I'm aware that I've presented you with several divergent issues which are not even handled by the same level of government, but I see it all looming. One big ball of concern that I can do nothing about. Our society is

responsible for assisting its citizens, all of them, especially the ones who can't write a coherent letter or present an articulate voice at a meeting."

I wanted to share her letter because this is 2016. Having a child with Down syndrome still comes with challenges: challenges with the Passport Program, challenges with supported housing, challenges with trying to find them a day program, and challenges trying to find jobs—meaningful employment—for people who have Down syndrome.

I believe that the bill that hopefully will be passed this afternoon will help us all focus on March 21 and every other day as to what we can do as a society to make those challenges a thing of the past—the sooner, the better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Madame la Présidente, congratulations on your ascension to the throne there.

Honoured table officers, my colleague from Ajax-Pickering, the honourable Joe Dickson, who is bringing forward this bill to bring attention to Down syndrome—I want to congratulate you, Mr. Dickson, on what I think is not only an overdue but very well-thought-out and much-needed stimulus to support and recognize and honour and celebrate all the members of the Down syndrome community.

I have to say that this is perhaps typical for the member for Ajax-Pickering. As you may notice, his licence plate is actually "VIPER"—and that bears exactly no relationship to this bill but I did have to mention it.

« Le syndrome de Down, également connu sous le nom de trisomie 21, est une anomalie chromosomique d'origine naturelle qui se caractérise par la présence chez une personne d'un chromosome surnuméraire dans la 21^e paire chromosomique. Approximativement un sur 800 nourrissons nés en Ontario a le syndrome de Down. On note chez les personnes trisomiques divers degrés de déficience intellectuelle et un plus faible tonus musculaire. Certaines personnes trisomiques peuvent éprouver des difficultés cardiovasculaires et gastro-intestinales, habituellement au cours de la première année de vie. »

Down syndrome has been recognized officially as a medical condition since the year 1866, originally in Britain by the physician and doctor John Langdon Down, hence the name. The chromosomal abnormality was actually identified officially by a French physician, Jérôme Lejeune, in 1959.

I might just highlight, for a moment, a quick biological lesson. All human beings generally have 46 pairs of chromosomes, as you, Madam Speaker, would know as a nurse yourself. Unfortunately, on occasion, there is a triplication of one of these chromosomes. It is chromosome 21, which by the way contains 329 genes. That is why March—meaning month three—21 is the day that has been chosen to proclaim as Down Syndrome Day.

I think I would have to echo my colleagues that the conceptualization or the thoughts around Down syndrome have a deep and perhaps not very noble history. If

you look back hundreds of years, when it was recognized as, for example, a very nasty kind of condition, it was not really thought that folks with Down syndrome would be able to participate, would survive for too long, would be able to live independent lives, would vote and marry and graduate and participate as full members of society. But as the Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in a different context, it's 2016.

So with that, I think that with a bill such as proclaimed today by my honourable colleague from Ajax-Pickering, we, as physicians, as legislators and as individuals who have the stewardship for the conversation that Ontario and Canada broadly have need to not only proclaim 03/21 as Down Syndrome Day—as, by the way, was proclaimed not too long ago by the United Nations General Assembly; we need to find more opportunities, just as we're striving in other areas, whether it's autism and so on, to allow individuals, their families and, of course, the mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers who are here today to be able to celebrate, to put away the stigma, and to help foster a more inclusive, integrated and generally happier society, particularly with regard to this particular condition, which, of course, can and often does lead to a number of different challenges, both social, intellectual, biological and medical.

Madam Speaker, I would say that this is an important bill. It's very much, I think, part of the thrust of the inclusivity of Premier Wynne and the Liberal government, and something that I can support in both a medical as well as parliamentary capacity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Ajax-Pickering to do a two-minute wrap-up.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to recognize and say thank you to everyone from the various ridings who spoke so eloquently here today. That would be Whitby-Oshawa, Kenora-Rainy River, Thornhill, the Minister of Community and Social Services, Hamilton Mountain, Durham, Ottawa South, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Nickel Belt and Etobicoke North. You have said—you have all said—that we have to raise the bar, and I appreciate those comments. I appreciate your words. I appreciate what you've done today.

I think maybe, in closing, I'd like to make a remark from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations: "We believe that people with Down syndrome should be allowed to pursue meaningful lives in their communities. We believe that all aspects of society should accept and include individuals with Down syndrome fully. We believe that new and expectant parents should have access to the latest, most accurate information about having and raising a child with Down syndrome. We believe that people with Down syndrome should not be defined by their disabilities, but rather should be celebrated for their abilities."

I think I'll just reread that last sentence: "We believe that people with Down syndrome should not be defined by their disabilities, but rather should be celebrated for their abilities."

Thank you, fellow members. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We'll deal with the vote at the end of this particular session.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly should commit to raising awareness of the threats caused by increased levels of ice melting in the Hudson's Bay and James Bay regions as part of this province's commitment to combatting climate change and its negative impacts on northern Ontario ecosystems.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Berardinetti has moved private member's notice of motion number 68. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to congratulate you on your new post. It's good that you come from a riding in Scarborough. Scarborough is going to be well represented.

I just wanted to start by saying that I believe that continuing to raise awareness and engaging in meaningful discourse are an important forward step in the ongoing battle against climate change. I'm proud to bring this motion forward as a way of encouraging and stimulating this key component of a responsible and effective climate strategy.

The science around climate change is clear, and skeptics of the underlying evidence are now, thankfully, very few and far between. The international community has acted boldly, holding key talks and global summits meant to stimulate further discussions and create meaningful solutions to back us away from the brink of an environmental catastrophe. Climate change threatens us all. As such, we all have a responsibility to work together to meet this challenge head-on.

1430

The people of Ontario have been directly affected. Communities have been severely damaged. Homes have been lost. Crops and businesses have struggled. Entire industries are facing setbacks. It hasn't always been easy, but Ontario has and continues to be a leading force in the fight against climate change. But there's always more to be done. Even though the science underlying climate change is now almost universally accepted—except for the Republican Party in the United States—there is a risk of becoming complacent or satisfied with the progress we've made. We must remain mindful not only of the human or economic costs of climate change, but the ecological ones as well.

I'm sure all of us in this House can agree that Ontario is blessed with unmatched natural beauty, which makes it all the more pressing that we continue to raise awareness of lesser-known regions in the province under environmental threat.

The Hudson's Bay and James Bay regions are two such examples. These bays are the largest bodies of water

in the world that seasonally freeze up each winter and become ice-free each summer. In Hudson's Bay, the ice cover starts to form in northern areas by the end of October and continues to grow until maximum coverage is reached by April. In James Bay, the ice cover begins to decay in late May and nearly becomes ice-free by the end of July.

One of the key features of these regions is that they are home to one of the most majestic species of animals we have in this province. I'm talking, of course, about polar bears. These cuddly but ferocious animals have been immortalized with a place on our toonie and continue to be a symbol of our national identity. Sadly, these national treasures are facing serious challenges due to increased ice melt brought on by warming climate trends.

This country is home to approximately 16,000 polar bears, representing 75% of the population worldwide, with approximately 10% of those living in the Hudson's Bay area. Polar bears are found in high densities along the Ontario coast, from Hudson's Bay and the western coast of James Bay north of Attawapiskat, during the ice-free season, typically between mid-July and November. They currently have no federal legislative protection, but are listed as threatened, as a species at risk in Ontario. In fact, Mr. Ian Stirling, one of the world's most esteemed polar bear experts, has claimed that by the middle of the century, we'll be likely to have lost two thirds of the world's polar bears.

Polar bears are at the top of the food chain, and therefore play an important role in the overall health of the marine environment and are considered important indicator species because they rely on sea ice for their food. Here's where the trouble lies: According to satellite images, the ice in the Hudson's Bay and James Bay regions has been disappearing at a rate of 10% per decade since 1979. The polar bears living in Hudson's Bay are at their most southern range and therefore at the highest risk of impact from a warming impact. In fact, it's strongly believed by many experts that warmer weather will likely make it impossible for the polar bears to survive on the shores of Hudson's Bay within 20 to 30 years.

It's not hard to see why this is such an important issue that this House needs to be aware of. While polar bears live on land during part of the year, they carry out many key functions, such as feeding and mating, on the sea ice. A warming planet means less ice coverage of the Arctic sea, leaving the bears with less time and less ice.

For example, the open water season in Hudson's Bay, the time in which bears are unable to survive on the ice, has increased by about three weeks since 1996. The time bears have on the ice is their best season, when they hunt for seals, fish and other prey. It gives bears the opportunity to restore their body fat and their fitness. But this vital period for storing energy for the warm season, when the ice is less and there's less food available, is becoming more and more limited on account of climate change.

This is particularly serious for polar bears that are pregnant or nursing young, and for the cubs themselves. In Hudson's Bay, scientists have found the main cause of death in cubs to be either their lack of food or lack of fat on nursing mothers.

Maternal denning sites, spring feeding areas and fall staging areas are the three most critical components of polar bear habitat. Spring feeding occurs on the sea ice, whereas denning sites and staging areas occur on land.

Climate change has resulted in the loss of sea ice habitat and maternal denning habitat, having the greatest impact on the survival of cubs and older bears. Additionally, these changes have led to an increase in the number of encounters polar bears have with humans—encounters that threaten the safety of both parties.

A recent research paper published by the National Research Council Research Press looked closely at this issue and served to further clarify its importance. I'd just like to quickly go over some of the findings.

If you'll recall, Hudson Bay undergoes a complete cryogenic cycle each year. It is entirely covered by ice by late December in most years, but the ice melts in summer, so there is a four- to five-month ice-free period in summer and fall. During the ice-free period, all bears are forced ashore, where they remain until ice forms again in late fall or early winter. While on land, polar bears generally survive on stored reserves acquired from hunting seals on the ice.

This study found that the net result of increased ice melts in the Hudson Bay and James Bay regions was that polar bears were forced to spend about 30 days longer on land in 2012 than bears did in 1980. That's 30 days they can't spend on the ice carrying out the functions necessary to their survival. It is no surprise, then, that earlier breakup is implicated in declines in body condition, survival and abundance of polar bears.

This is similar to earlier estimates of advances in breakup of three to four weeks in the western half of Hudson Bay between 1971 and 2003. A similar trend of earlier breakup and later freeze-up was documented in the northern regions of Hudson Bay, Foxe Basin and Hudson Strait. Simply put, polar bears are running out of livable ice in Ontario. Our polar bears are under threat, Madam Speaker. This is clearly evident in the role that polar bears play in our national identity. Greater awareness needs to be brought to the matter.

I'm speaking fast, Madam Speaker, trying to get my whole speech in.

However, what we need to keep in mind is that the problem of increased ice melts is merely a single representation of a larger threat facing Ontario ecosystems. These threats are significant, and it's crucial that we in the Legislature be keenly aware of the destructive impacts of climate change in these critical regions.

In the last three and a half minutes that I have, Madam Speaker, I want to talk briefly about the boreal forest. The boreal forest and lowlands of northern Ontario comprise the most intact boreal forest in the world, covering an area roughly the size of France. This ecosystem

includes the Hudson Bay lowland, which is one of the most expansive wetlands in the world.

According to various studies, recent global warming trends have negatively impacted the growth and survival of boreal tree species and have increased the frequency of costly wildfires and more severe pest-related damage. There is also evidence of the direct effects of climate change, such as increased temperature stress, drought stress and freeze/thaw damage. It is an ecosystem that has experienced increased fire frequency and pest damage.

There is also increasing evidence of a systemic change in boreal wildlife that is consistent with a climate change signal, including shifts in species range and behaviours. Some of the boreal forest's most beloved songbirds have faced steep population declines over the past 40 years, including the Canada warbler, which has had a 75% decline; the evening grosbeak, which has had a 75% decline; the rusty blackbird, which has had a 90% decline; and the olive-sided flycatcher, which has had a 70%-plus decline.

Since the 1850s, the mean annual temperature in the boreal forest regions of Canada has risen from 0.5 degrees Celsius to 3 degrees Celsius, with increases of greater than 2 degrees Celsius west of the Ontario-Manitoba border. The intergovernmental panel on climate change recently published its fifth assessment report, and concluded that increases of 2 degrees Celsius in mean annual temperature by 2050 are highly probable, and the mean annual temperature across the Canadian boreal zone could be 4 to 5 degrees warmer by the year 2100.

Warmer temperatures, coupled with changes in the distribution and timing of annual precipitation, are likely to cause serious tree-killing droughts. Climate change has already begun affecting the boreal zone, with projections indicating that the northern portions will be hit harder than further south.

1440

I could go on, Speaker, but suffice it to say that the Hudson Bay and James Bay ecosystems are at huge risk from what climate change threatens. The increased ice melt brought on by changing climate trends in the Hudson Bay and James Bay region threaten the existence of one of our most beloved animals and represents a much larger concern of ecological damage in those regions. It's a serious issue that will carry significant consequences for our province.

That's why I'm putting this motion forward today. I wanted to also mention that other speakers will be speaking on other parts of this motion. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Madam Speaker, may I say you look great in that chair? Congratulations.

It's a pleasure to join the debate today with regard to motion 68. I think it's safe to say that everyone in this House agrees that climate change is a serious concern

that we all must be cognizant and thoughtful about. To the member opposite, I want to say that I appreciate your concern.

In the early 2000s, my sister and brother-in-law lived in a community on the north tip of Hudson Bay. It was formerly called Repulse Bay; it has now returned to his original Inuit name. I recall that we went up to visit them on the May 24 weekend one year. There was concern because the polar bears were coming close to the community. They had to go and deal with the threat accordingly. The only reason that particular bear was coming close to the community was that it was looking for a new food source.

So I do appreciate what you're saying, and I want to really stress the fact that the PC Party of Ontario remains committed to tackling climate change in a fashion that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting taxpayers and our economy.

When we talk about what we're facing around the Arctic Circle—again, the community that Lana and Michael lived in had the Arctic Circle run right through it. It was pretty cool to be up there.

I just want to share with everyone here in the House today that the Ontario and federal governments have already invested significant time and resources to address this issue. For instance, the Canadian Ice Service produces daily updates on Arctic ice levels and releases seasonal summaries describing ice conditions in the north. Yes, Speaker, this service includes several detailed maps of the ice conditions in southern Hudson Bay, the region immediately above northern Ontario.

People in the House today might also be interested to learn that this same service provides an annual ice atlas, which offers year-to-year comparisons about ice levels in Canada and Ontario.

We don't want to get stalled and use a lot of time on a motion when we have yet to develop an effective response to climate change. But don't get me wrong; we all know that we have to get this issue right, and, to the member, we are sensitive to and cognizant of that.

In terms of getting it right, I don't feel that it will put us on the right path if we pursue the cap-and-trade scheme that the Liberal government has introduced. As you know, the Ontario PCs are flatly against the cap-and-trade slush fund.

I was just touring a business on Carlingview Drive, and even they are worried that cap-and-trade in Ontario will increase the cost of living and doing business in Ontario.

As I said, it's not just our party who is against cap-and-trade; so is the Ontario public. Last month, a Forum Research poll in the Toronto Star revealed that 59% of Ontarians disapproved of cap-and-trade altogether, and 68% disapproved of the rise in prices associated with cap-and-trade.

While we're amicable to this motion, and I applaud the member for coming forward with it, we really need to be cognizant that in the larger picture, when it comes to addressing climate change, we do not handcuff Ontarians

with a costly scheme that will impact business as well as households. My fellow colleagues will pick up from there.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad to have an opportunity to add my voice to what it means to face climate change in northern Ontario.

The member had focused on some of the big animals that live in northern Ontario, and I agree with him that some of the animals are having a tough time adapting to climate change. I will add to this that there are people who live in northern Ontario, and we are also having a very tough time. There are businesses that set up shop and are trying to thrive, and they are also having a tough time.

I would look a bit at the record. We have known that climate change has been coming for quite some time. I was here in 2007, when the government directed an Expert Panel on Climate Change Adaptation to advise on how to minimize the negative impact of climate change. The expert panel produced its report in November 2009 with 59 recommendations and a call for prompt and vigorous action. Unfortunately, not much has been done.

It was followed in 2011 by the Ontario government's release of Climate Ready: Ontario's Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2014. That plan outlined the government's action over four years—that is, to 2014—with five broad goals and 35 specific actions, but nothing was done, Speaker. The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario expressed caution: How come there are no timelines? How come there's no funding? How come there are no accountability provisions in all of that?

In a subsequent report from the Environmental Commissioner, he reported frustration with the government's retreat from the responsibilities it had assigned itself on climate readiness.

Then in 2013, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario's report was titled *Failing Our Future*. He said that "the government's long-term energy policy could wipe out some of the gains that have been made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions," adding, "There has been little progress to report this year."

In 2014, the Environmental Commissioner's report came with a headline of "Ontario Is Failing in Fight Against Climate Change."

Despite the lack of action, the members continued to focus on awareness. I think it was quite telling that on March 12, 2015, about a year ago and a bit, a member from this House, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, motioned to recognize that climate change exists and poses a threat to Ontario's environment, businesses, communities and economy. It passed unanimously, but not without some questions. I think the member from Toronto-Danforth said it best when he asked why it was that we had to vote on whether or not we believed the earth is round. We've passed this, Speaker. We're way past this.

By the end of 2015, the government released its climate change strategy. That was a 40-page report, in-

cluding a lot of pictures and cover pages, with few targets, no timelines and no details—very much like the 2011 document. But it does say that it promises a “climate-resilient” Ontario by 2030. On page 36 of that latest report, where one might hope to come up with an action plan, you see only a title page that says, “The Action Plan to Come.” We’re still waiting with bated breath a year later, and the action plan has not come.

The government’s recent Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, pretty well does the same thing: no provision for climate change adaptation.

I started my remarks by saying that, yes, there are big, beautiful animals that live in northern Ontario. The polar bear is one. There are many others. But there are also people, and a lot of the people who live in the far north of Ontario are First Nations.

1450

I had the opportunity to talk with Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day. Chief Day and I were both stuck at the airport on Monday, not able to fly because of inclement weather, and basically we started to talk about the environment. He shared with me his frustration as to how climate change is having a real effect on the people who he represents, on the First Nations who live in the far north of Ontario, but nobody has come to talk to them. Nobody has opened up a dialogue that says, “What do you think the action plan should look like so that we prepare the people of the north and the beautiful creatures that live there for what is coming?” Nobody has ever come to ask.

Believe me, when it comes to knowing Mother Nature, when it comes knowing Mother Earth, when it comes to protecting our environment, you can’t beat the First Nations. When they make a decision, they make a decision for what that will mean for the next seven generations. They have spent a lot of time looking at their environment. They have intimate knowledge of the changes that are presently happening to their environment. They have ideas as to how we can make sure that those changes are mitigated if they need to be, or adapted to so that people, animals, polar bears and everybody else can thrive. But nobody ever comes to talk to them. Nobody ever asks them for their input. Nobody wants to hear the good ideas that they have.

I know that I have to leave time on the clock for my colleagues; I will say thank you very much for this opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. May I say again that it is really great to see you in the chair. I think you’re having a calming effect on this place. It’s been quite good this afternoon.

I want to congratulate the member from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this motion forward. It is an important motion. As we read the motion, it talks about raising awareness about increased levels of ice melting in Hudson Bay and James Bay. That’s exactly what it says:

increased awareness, and not just increased awareness of the kind of effects that it’s having in northern Ontario, which are incredibly important to this province and to the people who live there. I take to heart the comments from the member for Nickel Belt with regard to First Nations and their ability to think generations ahead of time. We could have done a better job of that ourselves, and I think that’s what this motion speaks to.

I’m glad that the member mentioned the boreal forests. The boreal forests are part of this planet’s lungs. This planet needs the boreal forest to breathe, so having the effects that we have on that not only affects people in the north, but it affects people in the south as well, and around this province and around this globe. Increasing that awareness and increasing the awareness about what effects we’re having on the vegetation, the animal life and, most importantly, the human life that exists in the north is how we as individuals and as communities treat the issue of climate change.

What do we do in our everyday lives in terms of reducing our use of carbon fuels and reducing our carbon footprint? As you know, our government is putting a price on carbon. That’s an important thing to do. I know it’s not supported by the members opposite. I do want to remind the member opposite, from Huron–Bruce, that when we closed the coal plants in this province, that was the biggest single carbon reduction anywhere. When it was going full tilt, coal plants in this province had a bigger carbon footprint than all of the oil and gas industry in Alberta. That was a tremendous change, and that wasn’t supported.

I think that it’s important that we support this member’s motion, Madam Speaker, because I think that we can do a lot more to educate ourselves inside this Legislature, but also, it’s important for us to create awareness. We discuss these issues every day inside here. Sometimes we make the assumption that socially, everything that we discuss in here is prevalent outside of here, but people only have so much time in their busy everyday lives to take in so much information. Raising the awareness of the kinds of impacts they’re having in northern Ontario—in Hudson Bay and James Bay—I think will be very important in terms of changing people’s behaviour and carbon footprint.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your new role. I can already see you’re having an impact on keeping the level down here. We might have to look at extending those hours a little bit. We’ll see.

It’s a privilege to get up on behalf of my residents in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to comment on motion 68, climate change and ice levels. It is an important issue and something we must look at. I don’t think anybody in this House disagrees with that. Climate change is real, but we need to work on a practical and well-thought-out approach to mitigate and solve what has been referred to as a very serious threat to our way of life.

There are many solutions, but meaningful results can only be achieved collectively. We can't do it alone. Ontario could and should be a leader who should work for our partners and our neighbours to the south. Ontario's carbon footprint is one tenth of 1% of the world's carbon footprint. If we embark, essentially on our own, on a foolhardy plan, we'll be bankrupt a long time before an impact is made.

Let us be clear: The Liberal cap-and-trade is just another tax grab. It's not the silver bullet that everybody is professing. The government is out of money and this is their latest scheme to refuel their spending addiction, mismanagement and waste. Speaker, they've done a yeoman's job at it: They've raised taxes and transfers that they collect by more than 100%—\$65 billion to over \$130 billion—and still, they doubled the debt. It's the largest subnational debt in the world—number one—and there are some able competitors around the world.

And waste: We have eHealth, gas plant scandals, smart meters, Ornge and more. We need to make an issue and make sure that people are aware of climate change, but it should not be an issue just to change the channel. I see this as a way of changing the channel away from the latest scandal we see in this House where we have discretionary funds being used that seem to reward people who make large contributions to this government. There's little wonder why people mistrust this government. They see it over and over again.

Again, I see another report in the *Globe and Mail* about a secret document talking about the same issue with large companies getting large amounts of government money. It just so happens—people would draw their own lines—they're large contributors to this party. It's little wonder that people are really wondering why we would want to change the channel.

Speaker, there are legitimate fears about the cost to the consumers. Ontarians will have to pay nearly \$900 more a year on gas and home heating. Small manufacturers will be hit with \$170,000 in new energy costs every year. This will put jobs at risk, shut down our investments in our province and increase the cost of gas, groceries and home heating for families.

I see these families in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry every day, who are having trouble paying the bills. This will only make it worse. We cannot take this issue lightly. We have to get it right and we have to be part of the big picture if we're going to have any real success. We need sensible solutions that don't just create another Liberal slush fund.

The current budget shows the Liberal cap-and-trade scheme will raise another \$1.9 billion in new revenues from selling carbon credits to businesses and big emitters. That's \$600 million more than the Liberals claimed in their fall economic statement. It's about making this government look good and not about results. The approach will end up manipulating the deficit and surplus figures, giving the Liberals a political advantage. The money will not be able to be looked at by our Financial Accountability Officer, something else that was planned

by this government and something that we see as an issue.

I know that other members want to speak to this bill. I think we have to be careful. Climate change is an issue, but we need to look at the problems in this House.

1500

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations.

It's once again an honour to be able to stand in the House and today comment on the bill from the member from Scarborough Southwest—the motion on the impact of climate change on the Hudson's Bay region. I have no doubt that the member is sincere, and I would like to thank him for bringing this motion forward.

In my riding, I have the Arctic watershed. If you go up Highway 11, you'll see a big monument: "From here, all water flows north," into James Bay and Hudson Bay. As a farmer who farmed my whole life in northern Ontario, I have no doubt about climate change. Farming in northern Ontario actually benefits from climate change. I'm not here to discount climate change, but the issue that we have to face with climate change is a very serious issue, and it's an issue that has been faced by First Nations for generations—that our modern society has passed the First Nations by because, quite frankly, they didn't fit into what our modern society was.

As our modern society cut down the Carolinian forest and cleared all the land down here and built skyscrapers, roads and all that stuff, the people from northern Ontario dug the mines and did all those things to build this modern society. The people in northern Ontario, who are also being impacted by climate change—farmers are going to benefit, but the others aren't. They are now also being bypassed by our modern society, which has realized that all this modern stuff we built impacts the climate. Climate change has been happening—it's not a new thing. Where my farm is used to be a glacial lake, so there has been climate change before, but our society has sped it up, right?

What about the people who are being passed by? As we do things to lessen our impact on the planet—which is great—we have to make that the people who don't live in the major centres, the people who don't quite fit anymore, are not the victims of climate change. The victims are the people who can't pay the bills because hydro is more expensive because—there are a few other things we would disagree with, but closing the coal plants is good thing, and it made electricity more expensive. But not everyone can pay that cost.

Last week in my riding, it was minus 30 degrees; today, 30 centimetres of snow fell. Climate change might be happening, but those people are still paying the bills, and a lot of them did the hard work and now are on pension, but the pension is not keeping up. They are victims because—again, with the increased tax on gasoline for the carbon offsets. We may agree or disagree, but some of those people who pay for the gasoline

have no choice. There is not going to be a subway. In northern Ontario, our bus routes are being cut. The people who could use the train to get here for medical appointments—it doesn't exist anymore. We hear, "We're going to build more transit." We're losing ours because we're losing our people. We are victims.

The people in outlying regions, the people who actually live in the boreal forest, as I do—we're the lungs of the province, the lungs of the world, but we shouldn't have to pay a penalty because we live in the lungs of the world. Our society has to make sure that everyone pays a fair share and that everyone benefits from the changes in climate. I think that's one we have to remember. Climate change is happening. We all recognize it. We've got to make sure that the solution which might be good for society as a whole doesn't leave a bunch of outliers who suffer, as the First Nations have suffered for generations because of our prosperity. This could very well be happening to the people of rural and northern Ontario as we speak, and that's something we have to be very careful of.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: This motion is very important, and I thank my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this motion forward.

As we know, the more attention that is focused on an issue, the more chance people will understand and get on board with measures to improve the situation, such as the cap-and-trade program.

As an educator, I can tell you that the issue of climate change is dealt with many times a day in classrooms all across Ontario, whether it's incidentally or in the Ontario curriculum. There are wonderful books that help students understand the urgency and importance of this issue.

The MPP from Scarborough Southwest pointed out that skeptics of the underlying evidence are now thankfully few and far between. But unfortunately, some still exist. I know that the opposition party just recently made a decision to support climate change, and I hope they'll get on board with the cap-and-trade issue.

This motion will once again highlight to adults—who are in constant need of reminders—the problems of climate change. Children in the schools know and can speak very wisely about these effects.

Climate change affects many natural resources. When lakes freeze and thaw, when the trees bud in spring—hopefully there weren't enough buds out on the trees last week, when we had our terrible ice storm. It affects crops, and it affects the beauty we see in spring as well.

Changing temperatures and precipitation cause extreme events that affect water resources. As climate changes, some species will adapt by migrating to new locations. I think we have a lot more Lyme disease in this area than we used to, because the bug has moved closer, where it can now live.

We have changing breeding seasons, and we have species seeking new food sources, throwing the food chain out of whack. Less adaptable species may even disappear from their current habitats.

The way certain species interact with one another and their environment may change. Less ice coverage and changes to lake freeze-up and breakup times may affect food supplies for aquatic species and may also affect fish spawning.

Changes in water and air temperature may make conditions more favourable for diseases and invasive species, which puts pressure on native species.

Mild, shorter winters, which we thought we were having, lead to changing rainfall patterns. Changes in the water's movement between air, soil, plants and bodies of water occur.

More extreme weather like we witnessed a few years ago in places like Burlington—it had never seen flooding before, and it had a lot of flooding.

There's also erosion, shoreline damage, infrastructure failures and decreased water quality due to increased runoff and debris.

Most aquatic species' growth and reproduction are strongly influenced by water temperatures. Higher temperatures in the Great Lakes and inland lakes could result in fewer cold-water species in Ontario, such as lake trout, yellow perch and large-mouth bass, which my colleague from Trinity-Spadina likes to catch in Little Lake in Barrie. At-risk fish species such as the lake sturgeon may disappear completely from Ontario.

Some wildlife species may be forced to move further north to a more favourable habitat. Climate change may affect wildlife reproduction, relationships between predators and prey, survival of species, rates of disease in wildlife species and the availability of food and habitat.

I urge everyone to pass this motion. I believe that the more attention we bring to this subject, the more support and action will take place. I thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm going to be a little more controversial, because you've have had a pretty easy go of it here on your first day. I'm not certain you've even had to admonish anybody. Quite a few of the NDP are sitting there quietly. I'm going to try to get them going a little bit too.

1510

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Yak's not here.

Mr. Bill Walker: Exactly.

It's a pleasure to rise and bring some thought to motion 68, on climate change and ice levels. Climate change is real. We have to invent our way out of it. We need to be innovative and creative, and there are solutions. But the Liberals' cap-and-trade is not the silver bullet that they're professing it to be.

There are legitimate fears by consumers. I have people in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—the farm community especially, and small businesses, and people on very fixed incomes—who are worried. Ontarians will have to pay nearly \$900 more a year on gas and home heating. Small manufacturers will be hit with \$170,000 in new energy costs every year.

We need sensible solutions, not Liberal slush funds. Cap-and-trade was projected to raise \$1.9 billion a year in new revenues from selling carbon credits to business and big emitters. That's \$600 million more than what they originally claimed in their fall economic statement. I am hopeful that they are not seeing this as just a cash cow to be able to fill their coffers and make up for many mistakes and the mismanagement that we have suffered over the last 13 years.

This approach, Madam Speaker, will end up manipulating the deficit and surplus figures to the Liberals' political advantage. The money will go to the Liberal government's consolidated revenue fund, from which they will pay for all their programs, not necessarily isolated to just environmental concerns. This increased revenue will not be put into a dedicated account that we can guarantee that they will actually combat climate change—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: —which they continue to say.

The Financial Accountability Officer—don't just listen to me and our party and the members of the third party, Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We're not going to have crosstalk over here, okay? I'll just remind the member from Beaches–East York and the Chair of Cabinet that we're not going to have crosstalk.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Hopefully they are listening closely to this, because maybe they can have some thought process afterwards and step up and speak up.

The Financial Accountability Officer, Stephen LeClair—so it's not just Bill Walker and it's not just the parties opposite—said this scheme “could mean an increase in government debt unless the projects are already included in the calculation of government borrowing requirements or are associated with already planned spending.” LeClair said the cap-and-trade proceeds will be put in the province's general revenue pot and show up on the books in the same way as do taxes or federal transfer money.

I'm not certain, if you were really sincere that you want to do this, why you wouldn't have set up an absolutely separate account where we can track every single dollar in and every single dollar out. We're into a bit of fundraising challenge and scandal, Madam Speaker, and I don't think we want to go there with the environment as well. The environment is very important to all of us, going forward.

The financial accountability watchdog won't even be privy to the details of the fiscal impacts, so that's somewhat—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. I am going to say one more time to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound that you need to speak to the motion.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am speaking to the motion, Madam Speaker.

The Financial Accountability—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I am going to remind the member that you cannot challenge the Speaker. Okay? So you need to speak to the motion. Either we are going to do that and follow the rules, or we are going to move to the next speaker. Now wrap up.

Mr. Bill Walker: Madam Speaker, I would never challenge you. I was more reiterating that I was speaking to the bill and was trying to bring up very salient points, particularly—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe the third party has more time.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No, we're done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No more? Okay.

The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my friend—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Madam Speaker, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Oh, did I—oh, my God! Bad, sexist minister. Terrible. Excuse me, Madam Speaker. I've always been a little gender-dyslexic—excuse me. I'm going to get myself in more trouble, so I'll just shut up right now.

Anyway, back to something that I feel a little safer talking about: the Arctic. I'll just ice those last comments I made.

I want to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest. I do want to talk about it, because why would you pick, of all the geography in the world, this particular place? The member shows great perception and understanding of this. I think that it's a very brilliant thing to do.

What do we know about our Arctic? It's already 2.7 degrees, almost three degrees, Celsius warmer. Why should we care? That doesn't sound like very much—unless it's that your children's body temperature went up that much; then you're rushing them to hospital. Small incremental changes in temperature can have catastrophic effects.

What is happening in Ontario as a result of the Arctic warming at that rate? In my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane's part of the province, over the next 30 years, that land will be eight degrees Celsius warmer than it was. Every one degree Celsius increase in temperature means that 7% more water is absorbed into the atmosphere.

As a farmer, which he's had a lifetime of, and his neighbours, you just think about that change in the hydrological cycle; all that water in the fields in the fall in large volumes, severalfold what's there right now—how hard is it to get crops out of the ground? If you think about a warmer Arctic as some bonanza for food, it may be in the near term, but not for very long. What do we know about this destabilized warmer Arctic? Does it mean we're always going to be warmer? I remember when 2014 came around and it was so cold on the Prairies that it went down to three or four metres of deep freeze, almost permafrost, that broke up the sewage and

water systems there. Then a year and a half later, it was so hot and so dry that the Prairies were on fire and you had air quality warnings—very destructive to agriculture.

But the problem is false springs. What happens is, just as we lost 80% of our apple crop in 2012, which was an anomaly that will now become a regularity, it got warm and then it got cold, and the blossoms died. The same thing happened last year in BC, where grapes and strawberries came out in January and they all died. Then in May and June, which is what most of us call summer or late spring, Halifax had four or five metres of snow, as did St. John's. That was the biggest damage to the agriculture and transportation economies in Atlantic Canada and loss of GDP.

What we're doing is we're losing our ability to grow food. It isn't just temperate; our sycamore trees in the Rouge Valley and Pelee Island don't bloom anymore because they come out early as part of the Carolinian forest, and when it gets cold, the buds die. So you don't have pollination and you don't have germination.

Madam Speaker, where does our food come from? Eighty per cent of our vegetables come from California, if you're an American or a Canadian. They're in a 40-year severe drought: no water from rivers, no more rain and their aquifers are being drained. This is all the result of changes in the Arctic from behaviours of people like us.

I commend the member for pointing this out. Hopefully, this teaching moment will help us to be motivated to greater unity on climate change.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Scarborough Southwest for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to thank all members who spoke on this bill, from Huron–Bruce, Nickel Belt, Ottawa, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Barrie, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

It's a huge issue that's in front of us. The good thing about these private members' bills or motions is that you get to learn something. When I brought this forward today, I had no idea—the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about being a farmer and the changes he's experiencing. That's really a big issue that should be tackled on some other day in some other location, maybe, or in another session.

The member from Nickel Belt spoke about the seven generations. It's so important to think that way. I had some dealings with the aboriginal communities that came to Scarborough because there's a big burial mound in Scarborough that was discovered in 1961. As they were developing that area, they found this huge native burial ground. It's still there, and it has been commemorated many times.

Other members have talked about various parts of this issue as well. Mine was to focus on one area mostly, the polar bear, but I learned a lot here today. At some point in time in the future, I'm sure the ministry or someone

will bring forward something with regard to polar bears. As I mentioned during my two minutes' time, Madam Speaker, they are being threatened. They may be one example and may be more popular because our culture looks at them in a different way, but the climate change issue in general is affecting us very quickly and in so many different ways, ways that I didn't even know today, which were mentioned by opposition members. Even the member from Barrie brought up some good things regarding some other species that are being affected by climate change.

Again, thank you very much for this discussion, and hopefully it will lead to a further discussion in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We'll deal with this item at the end of this session.

I'm going to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

1520

VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order, Speaker: Before we proceed, we have so many new people coming in, I'd like to make an introduction of some, if I could.

Caleb Ellis and Kelly Semkiw are here from MySafeWork and their Jersey of Courage campaign; Lisa Bastien, Mooge Dae Cox and Meti Kouhstani are here from the Canadian Labour Congress; we have Vern Edwards from the Ontario Federation of Labour; Vena Sharma is here from Unifor; Karl Crevar is here from the Ontario Network of Injured Workers; and we have representatives from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, the Power Workers' Union, the Society of Energy Professionals, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, the Service Employees International Union, United Food and Commercial Workers, and Workers United. Speaker, with your indulgence, a shout-out to two classes of 40 Unifor health and safety activists and reps watching Queen's Park live from Port Elgin this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Just a reminder to members: If you are going to introduce guests, you should be putting it into your time that has been allocated, but I'll do this as an exception.

WORKERS DAY OF MOURNING ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE JOUR DE DEUIL POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Mr. Hatfield moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act to proclaim a Workers Day of Mourning / Projet de loi 180, Loi proclamant un Jour de deuil pour les travailleurs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We in this Legislature observe the 28th day of April as Workers Day of Mourning, and we've done that since 1988. The purpose of this bill is to

standardize the way we in Ontario acknowledge the significance of the 28th of April. With this bill, we intend to increase the public's awareness of the Workers Day of Mourning. We intend to promote workplace safety, and we want to see more respect paid to injured workers.

We lower the flags on the Workers Day of Mourning as a sign of respect for the men and women who have been injured on the job.

We lower the flags for the men and women who became diseased because of the conditions they had to put up with at work.

We lower the flags to honour the memory of those who were killed while earning a living.

We lower the flags to show solidarity with the families they left behind.

We lower flags to validate and reinforce that those lives had real meaning and won't ever be forgotten.

We lower the flags here at the Legislature, and we lower flags at our provincial buildings, including the Ministry of Labour and WSIB offices.

The lowered flag is a powerful symbol of our respect for the day of mourning, our shared loss and our commitment to workers' safety. It shows we care, and it demonstrates that we care for their surviving family members as well. Lowering the flag is a sign of dignity, a symbol of respect and a call for justice.

We've done that here; however, sometimes it's been hit-and-miss elsewhere. For example, some school boards may agree to lower the flag at the board office, but they won't do it at all the schools within their jurisdiction—there are nearly 5,000 elementary and high schools throughout Ontario. Some municipalities will do it; some don't. I'm told it's the same at hospitals and college and university campuses. It's an inconsistent approach.

This has to change. That is the purpose of this proposed legislation. This bill will make the public, especially our younger citizens, more aware of the Workers Day of Mourning. It should send a message to employers that they have to do more to train their employees and secure and maintain a safe place to work.

The Ministry of Labour is the first to acknowledge that workers new to a job are three times more likely to be injured during their first month at work than more experienced employees. One horrific example in Oakville, at a bakery: Eighteen-year-old David Ellis, on his second day on the job—no training, no supervision—was left alone on the shop floor. He was cleaning an industrial mixer, a mixer that had been previously designated as faulty by ministry inspectors, a mixer on which the bakery failed to install a low-cost safety device, a mixer that was accidentally activated, and David Ellis was sucked in head-first and killed on his second day at work. That was 17 years ago, Madam Speaker, and we still have young people dying on the job in Ontario every year since.

Caleb and Kelly, members of David's family, came to Queen's Park this morning. They're here this afternoon to support this bill and to continue their ongoing

campaign for safer workplaces in our province, with their Jersey of Courage campaign. Thank you very much.

Applause.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I recall an accident down my way, in Tilbury—the second day on the job for Jared Dietrich. He was 19. He died when he got caught in the conveyor belt of a foam-recycling machine. That was in 1999. The company was fined \$40,000—\$40,000 for the death of a 19-year-old young man just starting out in the Ontario workforce.

Speaker, 30 young people in Ontario between the ages of 15 and 24 died in work-related accidents between 2009 and 2013. During that same time period, more than 30,000 young people received injuries resulting in lost time at work.

When a serious injury or a death occurs on the job site, ministry investigators are called in, charges are laid and the case makes its way through the legal system, which usually takes a year or two but sometimes a lot longer.

In 2009, you may recall that on Christmas Eve, four men fell 13 storeys to their deaths from what is known as a swing stage at a Toronto high-rise. Originally, the company was fined \$200,000. The appeals court boosted that fine to \$750,000, and this past January the manager of that construction project was sentenced to three and a half years in jail. He's appealing his sentence.

"Kill a Worker, Go to Jail"—that message was launched by former OFL leaders Sid Ryan and Nancy Hutchison, and that's still the message today from Chris Buckley, the new president of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

We realize that no time behind bars or no financial penalty can bring back a worker who was killed on the job. No jail time can undo the pain inflicted on the families of the men and women who are killed while at work in Ontario, but it sends a powerful message to other employers to clean up their act and make on-the-job health and safety training and supervision more of a priority.

Following that Toronto high-rise accident, Speaker, an expert panel made a number of recommendations. One of them included increased health and safety curriculum in our high schools. Lowering the flags at high schools would be a meaningful teaching tool for what recommendation.

There are something like 200,000 new claims a year opened at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the WSIB.

Injured workers in this province shouldn't be treated as criminals or people trying to scam the system, yet many of them tell me that's exactly how they are made to feel when dealing with the WSIB.

Dignity, respect, justice—three small words with great significance. Injured workers deserve dignity, respect and justice from the WSIB.

We have nearly 500 new claims a day for occupational injury or illness; 54,000 lost-time injury claims came in last year, and another 126,000 injury cases were reported which didn't end up with time lost.

Health and safety is a critical issue. Last year, ministry inspectors issued 131,197 orders for non-compliance. Last year, the ministry levied fines totalling \$9,365,870. Employers need to step up. Our public institutions need to do their part to highlight unsafe work in Ontario and the struggle to make things better. In the construction industry alone, an average of 20 workers are killed every year in Ontario. Between 1998 and 2015, 359 workers were killed on construction sites in Ontario. One is too many.

1530

How do we get workplace safety to be more of a priority? Well, for one thing, we make the Workers Day of Mourning more of a priority. We make more people in our communities aware of the enormity of the injuries and the deaths workers face every day on the job. We strip away any complacency. We say to those who have neglected to lower their flags: "You are funded by provincial money. You will join us in honouring the Workers Day of Mourning. It's the right thing to do."

Together, we can make Ontario workplaces more safe for each and every one of us, our sons, our daughters and our grandchildren. We owe it to them so they can go to work and receive the training they need for the job they do and come back home safe and sound each and every day after work.

My hat goes off to the men and women who hold the annual ceremonies in their communities in observance of the Workers Day of Mourning on the 28th day of April. In Windsor, Rolly Marentette and Tracie Edward have done it for our district labour council. We have surviving family members who attend every year, so we don't forget people such as Cindy Libby, Claudio Cardoso, Johnny Hunt and Elie Seremach, just to name a few.

Speaker, we had eight workplace fatalities in Windsor and Essex county in 2014. One is bad enough; eight in one year in our small community is outrageous.

I want to thank Vern Edwards, the OFL's director of health and safety, for the work he does on the importance of April 28; and OFL director Laurie Hardwick, who is a strong advocate for injured workers.

Day in and day out, we leave home to earn a living to put food on the table, to keep a roof over our heads and to provide for our families, yet not all of us return healthy, and some of us never return at all. We all have the right to come home from work safe and unharmed in any way.

Asbestos and other occupational hazards will be the theme of this year's annual ceremony in many communities. As a reporter, I remember well the stories we did at CBC Windsor on people such as Tommy Dunn. Tommy worked at Bendix Automotive making brake shoes. He died of mesothelioma. He was 35. His widow, Lucy, comes to our day of mourning ceremony every year. Lucy has also lost a brother, a brother-in-law, a sister-in-law and an uncle to workplace hazards.

We have to do more to make workplace safety much more of a priority. We need more inspectors, more enforcement, better training, tougher sentences, and we

need more compassion for the injured workers in this province.

I know I'm running out of time, Speaker. I just want to say that, yes, lowering the flags is a symbolic gesture, but it's the least our publicly funded institutions can do to increase recognition of workplace fatalities, injuries and occupational diseases. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I turn to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Certainly, there are an awful lot of people on this side of the House who would like to talk to this important issue, so we're going to be sharing our time amongst ourselves. I don't want the member to think that the brevity of my remarks, which will be about three minutes, is any indication as to the seriousness, or the admiration I have for him for bringing forward this very, very important issue.

It's an issue I hope will meet with the pleasure of all members around this House, because we're joined today by some people who have some lived experience in this regard. I know that Caleb Ellis is here. Certainly, I've gotten to know Caleb's dad, Rob, and his sister Jessica, as a result of the work that they do to educate young people about what can really happen when an industrial accident takes place or an accident at work takes place.

I know we're joined by some folks from the injured workers' groups who do a wonderful job on a daily basis ensuring that politicians and the rest of the people, including businesses, unions and organized labour—everybody—understand the importance of this issue and how seriously we must treat it. I know we have SEIU up there and perhaps some of the other folks from the OFL, as well.

I think we're all here today because we agree, as the member said, that one death is too many. If you look at the progress that has taken place since 2003, we've been able to reduce the incidents in this province by about 40%. What's remained stubbornly high, though, is that the fatalities haven't dropped. The fatalities have plateaued—there's that straight line. Even though the number of jobs is going up and you could say in one regard maybe they are coming down, they're not coming down enough for me and they shouldn't be coming down enough for anybody in this House as well.

We are making some progress in the fact that since last April, we've been targeting places where a lot of the fatalities occur. Where people are killed most often on the job sites are falls from heights—people falling from as little as six feet, people falling off high-rise buildings, off projects like that. I can tell you, Speaker, that as a result of introducing mandatory—not voluntary, mandatory—falls-from-heights training, we have had 100,000 people since last April who have taken that training, not because they wanted to, but because this House told them they had to because we treat this issue with the seriousness that it deserves.

We're the only jurisdiction I am aware of in the world—and until I'm proven wrong, I'm going to keep

saying this—that has a Chief Prevention Officer; that has one person who acts on my behalf as Minister of Labour. That person's sole job is to prevent injuries in the province of Ontario. Other jurisdictions, I know, have looked at that and thought it's a good idea. I hope that they would follow suit. I think we should be proud that we've taken that road.

But, Speaker, I think what the member is doing today is bringing forward an expansion of an idea that started in this country a few years ago. We should recognize people who have been killed on the job and people who have been injured on the job, the same as we would mourn any other death, with the seriousness that it deserves.

When people go and serve their countries in different ways, the people who participate in the economy expect to come home at the end of the day. Too often, they don't. I think the idea that's being put forward by the member from Windsor—Tecumseh is an excellent way for this House to come together and ensure that people around this province have that symbol on the day of mourning, when those flags are lowered, and that we think about it at least for one day.

Thank you for bringing this bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I too will be sharing time with my colleagues, including our well-respected statesman and critic, Ted Arnott.

It's estimated that up to 90% of workplace deaths are preventable. Our PC caucus believes we must all work together to improve workplace safety, with the goal of preventing any death in the workplace.

I commend my friend and colleague Percy Hatfield, the MPP for Windsor—Tecumseh, for a very passionate and moving presentation. I think this is a very important matter. The day of mourning provides an opportunity to remember those who have been killed or injured in the workplace, and to show our support for their families. By recognizing April 28 as the Workers Day of Mourning, it will help raise awareness about the need to be more vigilant about workplace safety.

I was very proud this morning, at Percy's invitation, to be at a sign the Jersey of Courage campaign; Caleb and his sister Jessica are here in the crowd. Thank you very much. I'm thinking of you.

When I thought of speaking to this bill, it brought me back to my time at Bruce Power. I remember, every year there, participating in the day of mourning. A total of 11 workers were killed during the construction of the Bruce Power nuclear site many, many years ago. Those names are immortalized on the cairn outside the administration centre.

The annual gathering always includes members of the Grey-Bruce Labour Council, the Power Workers' Union, the Society of Energy Professionals, the building trades union, Ontario Power Generation, members of Saugeen First Nation and, of course, most importantly, family members of those who lost their lives during the construction of the Bruce site.

CEO Duncan Hawthorne always said, "Safety is our number one value at Bruce Power. That means every one of us has to care enough to act to ensure our workplace is safe for our colleagues."

That was the culture. That was the principle. But most importantly, that was what Duncan and all the people there ingrained. Everybody who came through the gates in the morning had to go home at night to their families and their loved ones. I can tell you, standing there, it was the most powerful and very impactful ceremony, to look at those families that had lost a loved one, to really make you stop in your tracks for at least a little bit of time and think, "What if that was me? What do I need to do?" It gave you the courage to act, regardless of what your skill was, what your job was. It was encouraging every employee and union partner to never forget the people who have died or become ill in the workplace, and to prevent it from happening again.

1540

I remember from my time there—and I think Percy is doing a great job of it, trying to bring this across our whole province and country, for that matter—that workplace safety is everybody's responsibility. Each person, in every work site, from the shop floor to the boardroom, in the Legislature, every single job: Take time. Take time to care enough to act. If you see something that could even slightly endanger one of your fellow workers, do the right thing. Step out and step up.

We all have the duty to ensure workplace safety. Percy, thank you again. I trust that you'll have unanimous support for this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's always a pleasure to talk about the workers. They are mourning specifically because it started in Sudbury, where I'm from. It basically started with an idea from Colin Lambert. Colin was a miner, like many other men in Sudbury. He was represented by the Steelworkers. He had this idea. So Sudbury was the first one. In 1984, we celebrated the first day of mourning in Sudbury, and we've been doing it for the last 32 years.

Applause.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. Yes.

In 1985, it was recognized by the Canadian Labour Congress, and they basically made it official in 1985. They called it "Mourn for the dead and fight for the living." Then, in 1988—it's quite interesting because it was on April 7, same as today. It was right here in this House. The NDP was in opposition, and we brought forward this motion that recognized April 28 as the day of mourning for all of our province. At the time, we only asked that the buildings that belonged to the government of Ontario bring down their flags. What we're bringing today is making sure that many other institutions lower their flags.

You may wonder, Speaker: Why April 28? Well, it's quite simple. April 28 was chosen because this is the day, in 1914, when this Legislature in Ontario was the first

one to bring forward the Workmen's Compensation Act. We were the first ones to bring that forward, and we did that. The Legislative Assembly of the time did that on April 28.

Actually, I have a cut-out from the Toronto Star from 1914 that says, "Jubilation reigns in the Labor Temple today over the passing of the Workmen's Compensation Act...."

"The passing of the Workmen's Compensation Act will be a source of great satisfaction to the workers throughout the province."

It passed with unanimous support through a voice vote, and it was under a majority Conservative government that this particular piece of legislation happened. I just thought I would throw that in.

I'm really happy. In my riding, everybody lowers the flag. The day of mourning is a sacred day. I guarantee you, I will be there at the Fraser Auditorium this April 28, and I welcome everybody from Sudbury to join us to honour the dead and fight for the living.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the member for Windsor-Tecumseh and all those who have spoken towards this very important bill here this afternoon.

Bill 180, the Workers Day of Mourning Act, is a very important piece of legislation, and I'm very, very happy to say today that I am supporting it. Thanks again to the member for bringing this very important bill forward.

I will be the first to tell you that workers are the backbone of this province and that without them and the labour movement, we would not have many of the benefits that we now enjoy in this wonderful province of Ontario.

I have mentioned many times right here in this House that in my former life I was a mediator and most often worked with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal, to settle cases between workers and employers, and in some cases families of deceased workers. It was extremely important to me that we came to a fair conclusion in matters that involved injured workers and their families.

Workers and those who have unions do important work in advocating for their own—because it is a daunting task for an individual to stand up to an employer, especially a large employer—to protect and ensure that workers can enjoy the rights they're entitled to.

Many of you in this House know that I also represented injured workers during my time with the Office of the Worker Adviser. I did that for two years, and it was one of the most rewarding experiences when I could win a case on behalf of an injured worker.

All too often, workers have settled for what the corporation they work for wants instead of what's right and what they're entitled to after working hard for that employer. It's especially tragic when workplace injuries or death occur, and I have dealt with many cases where that was the case.

As a former speaker said earlier, one death is one too many. Maybe those deaths aren't a consequence of negligence—we all have varying amounts of risk in our work—but it's important that we have an occasion to reflect, and that the occasion is observed as widely as possible, so that awareness of the importance of workers and their craft is recognized and that those who are killed on the job receive the thanks and recognition they so richly deserve.

I guess my time is up. Madam Speaker, I will be supporting this bill. Again, I would like to thank the member from Windsor-Tecumseh for bringing this bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to recognize the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm also pleased to rise and speak on Bill 180, the Workers Day of Mourning Act, which was brought forth by the member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

It's not just about deaths at the workplace. There are also injuries at the workplace. Unfortunately, a lot of times injuries do lead to death, and I think that, yes, we want to highlight the dangers of the workplace, but not just raise concerns about death. There are many, many injuries in the workplace.

We all recall that some workers fell from scaffolding just this year. I think there were criminal charges against the supervisor. When we hear deputations from first responders about post-traumatic stress disorder—how stressful was that for the people who saw them hanging on for dear life from that scaffolding for a while, before they fell to their deaths?

We could do lot more, I think, by teaching young kids, just like we did with drugs and smoking. I often rise here and talk about how we can get the message to adults through the kids, but we can also educate the kids. I don't recall too much being done when I was a student in school about workplace safety and how dangerous—and not to just assume that your co-workers or supervisors are watching out for you; that you have to have some thought and follow the rules. Wear the safety goggles, wear the safety helmet, wear the proper shoes, and ensure that you and your co-workers—you're part of a team, just like we are here in the Legislature—remain very safe.

I recall, as well, a man dying in hospital in my city of Vaughan. Unfortunately, he was electrocuted. This story is from November 24, 2015, just last year. He was a vacuum truck operator doing an excavation, when the truck boom made contact with a power line near Highway 7 and Dufferin. That is about a five-minute walk from my house. Again, the first responders at the scene—that's quite horrific.

I want to take this time to thank everyone who is there to treat the injured workers and make sure that they aren't going to be succumbing to their injuries.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and congratulations, by the way.

I also want to extend congratulations to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and, of course, to the Ellis family, who are here, and to everyone else, but particularly to him for bringing this forward. This is a major step forward and it's a really important one.

I'm the daughter of someone who succumbed to a workplace injury. My father was an absolutely ardent, active unionist in the painters and decorators union, and in the early 1970s he died because of it. He died from emphysema complications from lead-based paint back in the day. That was before the Workers Day of Mourning was even instituted. I can tell you, we mourned, and we also fought for the living. Every year at the Labour Day parade, I remember, and I still watch the injured workers and I salute them for all their incredible work. Many are right, and they have spoken about it: It's not just about death; it's also about injury.

I also very clearly remember the Metron tragedy. I was up there. There was an impromptu rally around the site when the police tape was still up. It was a horrific time. It was a horrific accident. And yes, finally, in January, it was recognized, and finally a manager did go to jail. That was a huge victory for workers everywhere.

The sad reality is that only about one in a hundred employers ever sees somebody from the Ministry of Labour. Only about one in a hundred employers ever gets a visit. That is the crux of the problem, because employers everywhere need to be visited not only for injuries—I have employers who don't pay their workers. For precarious employees, for all sorts of other psychic and physical injuries, employers need to be visited and they need to be held to account.

The Conservative member from Thornhill mentioned post-traumatic stress disorder. That was a step forward. We just got royal assent for that bill yesterday. It's not just physical injuries either; it's also mental injuries—38 suicides since January on that account. So we passed that—that's good—but it took eight years. I hope this doesn't take eight years. I hope we not only pass it today, but that it becomes law virtually immediately, and I hope even before it becomes law, this April, people listen, hear this debate and lower their flags. They don't have to wait for the law. Do the right thing, and do it now.

I'm going to leave it there because others want to weigh in, and they should, but again, thank you to all who are here who have fought on this issue for so long. To the injured workers who are still fighting WSIB: Keep fighting because we will win that too. We are proof positive here in the New Democratic Party that if you just keep on keeping on, you will win. We have and we will, and this will too.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? The member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and might I say at the start, formally, congratulations on your new role. You're doing an outstanding job already.

I want to commend the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for this private member's bill, Bill 180, that he has

introduced in the Legislature today. I think he deserves credit for it. He has been here now for almost three years and before that served on Windsor council for seven years, so he's got about 10 years of elected public service. I think he's well-liked by all members on all sides of the House and he deserves enormous credit, as I say, for the work that he does here.

Again, this bill, An Act to proclaim a Workers Day of Mourning, is well-intentioned and is certainly a bill that our party wants to support in principle. It would establish April 28 each year as Workers Day of Mourning and require that all Canadian and Ontario flags flown outside many of our public buildings to be flown at half-mast on that day to raise awareness. I think that's a commendable suggestion. This would apply, of course, to the Legislative Building here at Queen's Park; other government of Ontario buildings; courthouses; other buildings, including city and town halls; schools and school board offices; universities; colleges; hospitals; boards of health; fire departments; ambulance services; police; crown agencies; and perhaps any other organization that might be named at a later date by regulation.

We believe that recognizing April 28 as a Workers Day of Mourning will indeed help to raise awareness about the need to be more vigilant about workplace safety. I think we all have a role to play in that regard, whether it's this Legislature, whether it's employers or whether it's trade unions and individual workers as well, working together to continually raise the bar in terms of improving workplace safety. This also provides an opportunity for us to remember those who have been killed or injured in the workplace, and to show compassionate support for their families.

We have heard estimates that up to 90% of workplace deaths are preventable. Obviously, our PC caucus believes that we must do all that we can to improve workplace safety, with the goal of preventing any death in the workplace.

There are actually four speakers from our caucus who want to participate in this debate, so I don't want to take too much more time, but certainly I want to inform the House of my intention to attend the day of mourning event that's coming up on April 28 at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board offices as our party's labour critic. I'm sure I will see the Minister of Labour there and some of the other members of the Legislature. It is a constituency week, but we do think it is obviously very, very important to demonstrate our interests and our support, and I certainly intend to be there.

I want to again congratulate the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his presentation this afternoon, as well as the initiative that he has brought forward. I would encourage all members of the House to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm so pleased the stand in this Legislature today and support my colleague the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. Thank you very much for your advocacy and care.

I am glad to stand in support of Bill 180, An Act to proclaim a Workers Day of Mourning. This bill takes the next step in support of killed and injured workers and recognizes them in provincial law with a Workers Day of Mourning, requiring that flags at public buildings be lowered to half-mast.

This morning, it was our honour to sign the Jersey of Courage that Caleb Ellis brought to us to sign. Thank you very much for your work, Caleb.

Many workers across Ontario are injured, maimed or killed every year on the job. People die in terrible accidents. They are injured or killed under avoidable circumstances. Speaker, we have laws; we have standards. We prioritize safety. There is no reason why anyone should be injured or killed on the job. There is no reason for anyone to be working under unsafe working conditions.

Employers who put their workers in jeopardy must be held responsible. Employers whose workers die on the job must be held responsible. The government must enforce its laws and regulations pertaining to workplace safety and make sure that working Ontarians are safe.

Every year on April 28, our labour councils, unions and organizations across our communities have beautiful and meaningful ceremonies and services across the province, but the greater community often isn't aware. By lowering the flags to half-mast across sectors, we're better able to spread that message of understanding.

Speaker, it has been over a year since firefighter hopeful Adam Brunt set out one day and did not make it home. He tragically lost his life in a training exercise while taking a private pre-service training course. Technically he wasn't yet a worker, but he was going to be. He and countless others across the province are unprotected while they train to become workers in their field. They are in a health-and-safety loophole.

There can be no loopholes or grey areas when it comes to health and safety in Ontario. We continue to call on this government to ensure that all our trainees and all our workers are kept safe as they pursue their careers.

We've been having very emotional conversations about the nature of work, and traumatizing work done by our first responders and high-stress service providers. Just this week, there was a terrible violent incident at the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care. This is an awful incident, and avoidable. This is a workplace with known dangers. We need to address these concerns.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm running out of time, and I'm getting tangled, and there's so much to say on this. But really, safety needs to be our top priority. Our nurses, health care service providers, front-line workers, first responders, builders, tradespeople, professionals, trainees and everyone else who sets out in the province to do their jobs deserve to work in a safe and secure environment, and deserve to come home.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm indicating clearly that I wish to support the legislation being brought forward by my friend Percy Hatfield, who for a long time, both in his

career as a municipal and provincial politician, and as a member of the CBC, has been a person who has been instrumental in bringing to the attention of the people of this province the great dangers that are faced by people in the workplace, and the unfortunate accidents that have happened, or incidents that have happened, in many of those cases.

1600

One of the most solemn ceremonies all of us attend is in our own communities. We have one right near the Welland Canal because there had been an accident where someone had fallen off the Skyway Bridge at that time and died. It was an accident on that occasion. We use the word "accident" advisedly because an accident is something that can be prevented if we really think of it, and prevention is very significant.

But as we attend these ceremonies, we get to meet the individual who has an incident that's happened, and within that family someone has died. Someone went to work one day; the family hoped that person would come back and the person did not because of death in the workplace. It's an extremely solemn ceremony, and I commend the members of the labour movement who, over the years, have ensured that we remember those whose lives have been lost in this way.

I was a member of the Legislature in 1988 when the resolution was passed unanimously by members of this House—on that occasion recognizing April 28 as a day of mourning for those who are killed in the workplace. This piece of legislation will further bring to the attention of the public these tragic situations which happen to occur in the workplace from time to time.

One can say, "Well, it's symbolic," and yes, there is some symbolism in it, in terms of the flag lowering. But it's important for two reasons. It's important because it's an educational opportunity as well; people can see that something has happened, that there is a day to look at, that there is a circumstance to reflect upon. Second, it is a tribute to those who have lost their lives and to the families of those who have lost their lives.

I think it's incumbent upon all of us, because we have to think of those individuals who—a cold hand comes over their heart when someone comes to the door to say there's been a death in the family, or they receive the news by telephone or other means. So I commend the member for bringing forward this legislation. I anticipate that it will pass unanimously.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: One death is too many. One death is too many.

I thank MPP Percy Hatfield for bringing forward this bill, which I support. I think it's worthwhile to turn our attention to the preamble of the bill, because there's a narrative within that bill that warrants some repetition:

"A day of mourning ... serves to protect the living by strengthening our commitment to health and safety in all workplaces in Ontario, helping to prevent additional deaths, injuries and diseases."

Today, a Workers Day of Mourning is recognized in more than 100 countries around the world. However, not enough is being done within the MUSH sector—municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals—to recognize this day.

It's appropriate that the province of Ontario build on the provincial resolution and on the federal act by recognizing in provincial law a Workers Day of Mourning and requiring the lowering of flags to half-mast.

This is repeating some of our earlier commentary, but approximately 1,000 Canadian workers are killed on the job each year while hundreds of thousands more are injured or diseased. It's also estimated that 90% of workplace deaths are preventable.

Raised awareness is necessary because risk remains an inherent part of many jobs. All workers, especially young workers, need to be aware of workplace dangers that they could face.

We continually see in media coverage incidents of industrial accidents. I have one here from Unionville, another from Markham and more that have also occurred in other places across Ontario. I'm pleased today to lend my support to the bill going forward, and I would encourage all members of the Legislature to do the same.

MPP Percy Hatfield, thank you so much for bringing forward such a solid piece of legislation.

Thank you so much, Speaker, and have a good weekend.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to recognize the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of my constituents of Kitchener–Waterloo to speak about the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's bill to properly recognize the Workers Day of Mourning in Ontario. I'd like to start by saying that of course we wholeheartedly support this bill, and it will make a difference.

It is important that we take the time to create symbols that recognize the lived reality of workers and worker safety in this province. Lowering the flag is a powerful symbol of our shared loss and our respect for the suffering of those who have lost loved ones. It raises awareness of the seriousness of the problem of death and injury in the workplace. Even more importantly, I wholeheartedly support this piece of legislation because it is directly connected to the work we should all be doing in this place to prevent any further deaths, injuries and diseases that occur in the workplace.

1610

As proud as I am to stand in support of worker health and safety, I am just as disappointed at how much work needs to yet be done. Worker safety in Ontario has not improved in any appreciable way in the past 20 years. In 1993, Ontario saw 292 worker fatalities. In 2014, there were 289. That's just a 1% difference. It's not nearly enough, when we consider how our youth, our young workers, are injured in the workplace, and when you think of the 30 young people in Ontario between the ages of 15 and 24 who died in work-related accidents between 2009 and 2013. During that same period as well, more

than 30,000 young people received injuries resulting in lost time at work.

One of these recent fatalities in 2013 hit very close to home for me. Nick Lalonde was 23 years old when he was killed on the job in 2013, on a construction site in Waterloo. He was knocked off the side of an 11-storey apartment building. He had not been properly trained. He left behind his partner and his young daughter, Aloe. This tragedy was entirely preventable. Since then, we have repeatedly asked the government to act on the recommendations to establish proper fall prevention training that finally happened on April 1, 2015.

It bears noting that at that workplace, there were 17 work orders put in place after this accident. The point is that you can inspect these workplaces after a worker dies, but that doesn't prevent the injury and it doesn't prevent the death. It's going to take more than a Chief Prevention Officer to keep workers safe in the province of Ontario; it is going to take all of us in this place, starting with the member's motion today. This bill recognizes that lowering the flags is an opportunity for us to share in this work together, and I commend him for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to be able to rise to speak to this bill on behalf of the member for Windsor–Tecumseh. He talked at length about the symbols associated with this. Of course, it doesn't bring workers back, but there's the symbolism and the hope that it will prevent future injuries.

The symbolism is extremely important. We see it on Remembrance Day every year. As a young boy, I used to go to remembrance services with my grandfather, a First World War vet—my father was a Second World War vet—and uncles and aunts. It instilled in me a deep belief in the importance of remembering what happened in war that I carry with me to this day. It is an extremely important day in my life.

The same will apply if we recognize in this expanded way April 28 as the Workers Day of Mourning. We'll see this, if we reach out to the schools and hospitals, everywhere across publicly funded institutions. It's so important because young people will now have a better sense of why this is happening and will be able to talk about it.

Just yesterday, we had the Ontario career colleges here and I met a young man named Emidio D'Alfonso. He runs a company called Pre-Apprenticeship Training Institute; they provide pre-experience for apprenticeships going into construction, in which worker safety protocols are extraordinarily important. He does this on behalf of the Merit OpenShop Contractors Association of Ontario and the CLAC sector. Those workers who will be working in construction will get that excellent training they need to go forward and work safely.

It was important for me as young man when I went out west and I worked on the oil rigs. I met up with a friend of my father who was in the oil industry and I got a job out in the oil rigs. He told me the day I went out there, "Be sure that you read the safety logs in that rig every

morning before you start work.” I was able to see the kinds of things that were happening in oil rigs across the province. I was 19 years old. I noticed, as a result of reading that, one of the big wrenches they use for tightening pipes was fraying. At the age of 19, I stood up to the drill rig boss and I said, “No, we’re fixing that before we carry on.” I know it helped me in that situation. The right to refuse is extraordinarily important. It’s a great bill and you will have my support.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I’m going to return to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh to wrap up; two minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I want to thank everybody who has made comments on the bill that has been proposed. I especially want to thank Caleb Ellis and Kelly Semkiw for coming today and bringing David Ellis back to life for us.

Applause.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I hope what you heard today means to you that he’s going to live for us, as well. We won’t forget David Ellis. We want you to keep on bringing that message of safer workplaces across our province and across our country, because you’re doing a great job. I know you have already collected more than 500,000 signatures, and we are behind you 100%.

Members, the jersey will still be out at the end of this today, and if anyone still wants to sign the Jersey of Courage, we would welcome that. I know that a lot of us signed it earlier today.

A million people die on the job around the world every year, and in many countries it’s accepted as business as usual. That’s unfortunate. It doesn’t happen here because we have the Workers Day of Mourning, we have district labour councils, we have the CLC and the OFL, and we have the Ellis family, speaking on worker safety every time, reminding us of what is going on out there. I’ll say again to Rolly Marentette and Tracie Edward, my folks in Windsor, thank you so much for keeping the workers’ day of mourning alive in my community.

We’ve talked about the symbolism of the lowered flag, Speaker. It’s a sign of dignity, it’s a symbol of respect and it’s a call for justice. What we want public institutions to do is to join us in that. I think it’s a worthwhile project.

The cabinet has the ability to move this forward in a rapid fashion; we know it can be done. We also know it should be done, and I hope we can move this bill to passage in very quick time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time provided for private member’s public business has expired.

ONTARIO DOWN SYNDROME DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA JOURNÉE ONTARIENNE DE LA TRISOMIE 21

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will now deal with ballot item number 27, standing in the name of Mr. Dickson.

Mr. Dickson has moved second reading of Bill 182, An Act to proclaim Ontario Down Syndrome Day. Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Dickson, pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—

Mr. Joe Dickson: —the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Berardinetti has moved private member’s notice of motion number 68. Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

WORKERS DAY OF MOURNING ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE JOUR DE DEUIL POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Hadfield has moved second reading of Bill 180, an Act to proclaim a Workers’ Day of Mourning. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is now referred to—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: —the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 6, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Damerla has moved second reading of Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I request that the bill go to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): General government. So ordered.

Orders of the day?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Bradley has moved adjournment of the House.

Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

The ayes have it. Carried.

The House stands adjourned until Monday, April 11, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1616.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

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Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
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Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
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Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
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Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
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McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibeault
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Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioe Lim

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
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la politique sociale**

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Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Marie-France Lalonde, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Wilfrid Laurier University

Mr. Ted Arnott 8459

Niagara Parks School of Horticulture

Mr. Wayne Gates 8459

Opening Minds through Art

Ms. Daiene Vernile 8459

June Fleming

Mr. Norm Miller 8460

Reach Out Centre for Kids

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris 8460

Refugees

Mr. John Fraser 8460

Visitors

Ms. Soo Wong..... 8461

Mr. Granville Anderson 8461

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic
Affairs**

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn..... 8461

Report adopted..... 8461

Standing Committee on Estimates

Ms. Cheri DiNovo..... 8461

Report deemed received..... 8461

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Special-needs students

Mr. Lorne Coe..... 8461

Persons with communication disabilities

Ms. Cheri DiNovo..... 8461

Caregivers

Ms. Ann Hoggarth..... 8462

Préposés aux services de soutien personnel

Mme Gila Martow..... 8462

Environmental protection

Mr. Percy Hatfield..... 8462

Lung health

Mr. John Fraser 8463

Hydro rates

Mr. Ted Arnott 8463

Hospital funding

Ms. Cindy Forster 8463

Sexual violence and harassment

Ms. Daiene Vernile 8463

Health care funding

Mrs. Julia Munro..... 8464

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor 8464

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS /
AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC
ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS**

**Ontario Down Syndrome Day Act, 2016, Bill 182,
Mr. Dickson / Loi de 2016 sur la Journée
ontarienne de la trisomie 21, projet de loi 182,
M. Dickson**

Mr. Joe Dickson 8464

Mr. Lorne Coe..... 8466

Ms. Cindy Forster..... 8467

Hon. Helena Jaczek..... 8467

Mrs. Gila Martow..... 8467

Miss Monique Taylor..... 8468

Mr. John Fraser 8469

Mme France Gélinas 8470

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri..... 8471

Mr. Joe Dickson 8471

Climate change

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti..... 8472

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson 8473

Mme France Gélinas 8474

Mr. John Fraser 8475

Mr. Jim McDonell..... 8475

Mr. John Vanthof..... 8476

Ms. Ann Hoggarth..... 8477

Mr. Bill Walker 8477

Hon. Glen R. Murray..... 8478

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti..... 8479

Visitors

Mr. Percy Hatfield..... 8479

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong) 8479

**Workers Day of Mourning Act, 2016, Bill 180,
Mr. Hatfield / Loi de 2016 sur le Jour de deuil pour
les travailleurs, projet de loi 180, M. Hatfield**

Mr. Percy Hatfield..... 8479

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn 8481

Mr. Bill Walker 8482

Mme France Gélinas 8482

Mr. Granville Anderson 8483

Mrs. Gila Martow 8483

Ms. Cheri DiNovo 8483

Mr. Ted Arnott 8484

Ms. Jennifer K. French..... 8484

Hon. James J. Bradley..... 8485

Mr. Lorne Coe..... 8485

Ms. Catherine Fife..... 8486

Mr. Arthur Potts 8486

Mr. Percy Hatfield..... 8487

**Ontario Down Syndrome Day Act, 2016, Bill 182,
Mr. Dickson / Loi de 2016 sur la Journée
ontarienne de la trisomie 21, projet de loi 182,
M. Dickson**

Second reading agreed to..... 8487

Climate Change

Motion agreed to..... 8487

**Workers Day of Mourning Act, 2016, Bill 180,
Mr. Hatfield / Loi de 2016 sur le Jour de deuil pour
les travailleurs, projet de loi 180, M. Hatfield**

Second reading agreed to..... 8487

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, 2016, Bill
178, Ms. Damerla / Loi de 2016 modifiant la Loi
favorisant un Ontario sans fumée, projet de loi 178,
Mme Damerla**

Second reading agreed to..... 8487

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 7 April 2016 / Jeudi 7 avril 2016

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Supporting Ontario's Trails Act, 2016, Bill 100, Mr. Coteau / Loi de 2016 sur le soutien aux sentiers de l'Ontario, projet de loi 100, M. Coteau

Mr. Paul Miller.....	8435
Hon. Ted McMeekin	8444
Mr. Norm Miller	8445
Ms. Cindy Forster	8445
Mr. Arthur Potts	8445
Mr. Paul Miller.....	8446
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	8446

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Bob Delaney.....	8446
Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	8446
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	8446
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8446
Mr. Wayne Gates	8446
Mr. Han Dong	8446
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	8447
Mrs. Laura Albanese	8447
Ms. Cindy Forster	8447
Mr. Arthur Potts	8447
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	8447
Mr. Joe Dickson	8447
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	8447

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Fundraising

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	8447
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8447
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8448

Fundraising

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	8448
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8448
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8448

Fundraising

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	8449
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8450
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	8450

Fundraising

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	8450
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8450
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8451

Fundraising

Mr. John Yakabuski	8451
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	8452

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor	8452
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8452

Correctional services

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	8453
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8453
Ms. Eleanor McMahon.....	8453

Fundraising

Mr. Monte McNaughton	8454
Hon. Brad Duguid	8454

Aboriginal affairs

Ms. Sarah Campbell	8454
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8454

Accès à la justice / Access to justice

M. Yvan Baker	8455
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	8455

Government accountability

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	8456
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	8456

Winter highway maintenance

Mr. Wayne Gates	8456
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	8456

Climate change

Mr. Han Dong	8457
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	8457

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	8458
-------------------------------------	------

Visitors

Hon. Reza Moridi.....	8458
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	8458

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Heeman's

Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	8458
---------------------	------

Autism treatment

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	8458
-------------------------	------

Katyn massacre and Smolensk air disaster

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	8458
----------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

